

















DREAMLAND AND GHOSTLAND.

VOL. III.







“There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.”

SHAKESPEARE: *Hamlet*, Act I. sc. v.

“For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.”—*Psalms* xci. 11.

“Angels, and ministers of grace, defend us!”

SHAKESPEARE: *Hamlet*, Act I. sc. iv.



# DREAMLAND

AND

## GHOSTLAND:

An Original Collection

OF

TALES AND WARNINGS

FROM THE

*BORDERLAND OF SUBSTANCE AND SHADOW;*

EMBRACING

REMARKABLE DREAMS, PRESENTIMENTS, AND COINCIDENCES;  
RECORDS OF SINGULAR PERSONAL EXPERIENCE BY VARIOUS  
WRITERS; STARTLING STORIES FROM INDIVIDUAL AND  
FAMILY HISTORY; MYSTERIOUS INCIDENTS FROM THE  
LIPS OF LIVING NARRATORS; AND SOME PSYCHO-  
LOGICAL STUDIES, GRAVE AND GAY.

*IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. III.*

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# DREAMLAND AND GHOSTLAND.

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## THE GHOSTS OF COTTENAL COURT.

[The truth of the following ghost story can be vouched for by four of my personal friends, two of whom were utter sceptics where the supernatural was concerned.]

THE scene of the occurrence is in Worcestershire. A great friend of mine, Colonel Edwards, and his wife, being desirous of exploring that county, had taken a lovely old house in the neighbourhood of Worcester, and as a kind of house-warming had invited several of their most intimate friends, myself among the number. I will not enter into details of the house, further than to say that, like all old houses of that date, the rooms were oak-panelled, the beds were huge four-posters, and in all other respects were as sombre and old-fashioned and as comfortable as possible.

The first evening passed pleasantly ; and after the

ladies had gone to their rooms, Edwards came with me to mine, as I wished to show him a curiosity I had found at Constantinople, so we all went upstairs to put on our smoking-jackets. As soon as Edwards and I entered my room we stopped short, astonished by a horrid smell that assailed our nostrils, an odour impossible to describe, as it was at once sickening and suffocating. With an exclamation of disgust Edwards rushed to the window and opened it wide.

“What a loathsome smell!” he exclaimed. “Did you perceive it when you dressed for dinner?”

No, I had not, and as I could see he was seriously annoyed about it, I tried to make light of the matter, suggesting it might be a dead rat, but he shook his head, and we went away leaving the window wide open; and a couple of hours later, when I returned to go to bed, all traces had departed. I soon undressed, and being wearied with my journey and the lateness of the hour, had scarcely laid my head on the pillow before I was in a sound sleep. It could not have lasted long, however, when I awoke with a start and a confused noise as of somebody knocking, followed immediately by a long, wailing cry. I raised myself on my elbow and listened intently, but there was no repetition of the sound, and concluding it must be “cats,” or perhaps a fox



in distress, I lay down again and composed myself to the sleep which needed so little wooing.

The next day was wet, and out-of-door amusements being impossible, Mrs. Edwards proposed that we should explore the old house, as some parts of it were rather curious and evidently very ancient. It was a picturesque, yet imposing structure, with thick stone walls and mullioned windows. The hall was very handsome; on one side about five feet from the ground was a large window, the only one in the hall; to the right as you entered was the drawing-room and a small library, but these were evidently modern additions, and were not in keeping with the house. The hall went up to the roof, and was arched across with black oak rafters. A large fireplace faced the window, and opposite the drawing-room ran the open corridors up-stairs. The dining-room opened out of the hall on the same side. The corridor was guarded by an oak balustrade, from whence you looked down into the hall, and it was only about nine feet from the level of the hall floor. As here the house was only of two stories high, there were but three rooms opening out of the corridor—one beside mine on the right hand, and one on the left, near the staircase that led to the other side of the house. The corridor ended beyond my room in a large embrasured window



with an old-fashioned settle at either side of it. The embrasure was so large that, had it been partitioned off by a curtain, it would have made a cosy little sitting-room. There was a great deal of curiously carved oak, and some of the beds were very handsome.

We explored the whole house, and I was struck with the small accommodation it contained, in proportion to its size; seen from the outside it looked quite a large mansion, but so much room was taken up by the thick walls, the numberless staircases and narrow passages, that the bedrooms were few in number, and mostly small. My room was by far the largest in the house, and I felt very grateful to have been treated as the favoured guest.

At the very top of the house was a large chapel, and in answer to my expressions of surprise at this, Mrs. Edwards told me that the reason for its being up-stairs was on account of the wide view commanded on all sides from its windows. At the time of the Reformation "Cottenal Court" belonged to some rich Papists, and as the persecution of the Roman Catholics was at its height, and private families were forbidden the ministrations of priests in their own dwellings, the old proprietor had built this chapel—which might have been an observatory from the number of its windows—and he had also added a private and secret



passage that led down to the cellars, and thence underground to a little round tower (some three miles away from the house) on the top of the hill. Whilst Mass was being celebrated a strict look-out was kept, and in case of any danger the priest would have quite sufficient time to make his exit by the narrow passage, the chapel would be restored to its every-day condition of spare or lumber-room, and the participators of the Mass dispersed to their usual avocations, before the thundering knock at the gate announced the arrival of the would-be inquisitors. The entrance to the secret passage had been bricked up, and no one seemed to know much about it, neither could any trace of an exit be found in the cellars or elsewhere; but a very old man—the lodge-keeper—had told Mrs. Edwards that, as a lad, he remembered the passages being closed, as they caused the family much disturbance.

I was always rather curious about these old-world mysteries, and lingered in the chapel after the others had left, tapping the walls and trying if I could discover the secret passage. My search, however, proving unsuccessful, I rested my arm on one of the window-sills, and stood looking out over the vast extent of country it commanded. Gazing thus I fell into a reverie, from which I awoke with a start, to find the sun had set and that it was getting dark



and very cold. As I turned to the door, a something, I could not see what, flitted across the left-hand window, and as I peered into the darkness I saw an object come from the far side of the chapel (it brushed so close past me that I felt its nearness) and disappear into the wall at the lower part of the chapel, not two yards from where I stood. I could not describe it, I could not distinguish what it was. It was a *something*, and that was all; but to this day I cannot account for the frenzy, the passion of fear and terror that seemed to take possession of me. I had never supposed myself to be a coward. I had been in danger of my life both by land and sea on more than one occasion, and though no hero, I had always comported myself as a man; but now I seemed to lose all self-control, and turning round, I simply fled down-stairs as if pursued by all the witches who so scared poor Tam O'Shanter; nor was it until I had reached my room that I had time to think, and to feel heartily ashamed of myself; but I must confess that I was truly glad to exchange the darkness of that gruesome chapel for the cheerful tea-party I discovered in the library, and to try, in the lively tattle and merry laughter, to drown the unpleasant recollections of the past hour up-stairs.

And now I have arrived at the event which is the real subject of my story—an event which I cannot



recall, though it is now some years since it occurred, without a feeling of perplexity and horror. Remember, dear reader, that I am not going to tell you of an apparition which appeared only to me; I should expect, and quite justly, to be laughed at as a timorous and imaginative sight-seer. What I am going to relate was visible at the same time to four men besides myself, and it took place in this wise:—

The ladies had gone up-stairs to their rooms later than usual. We had played billiards most of the day, and no one seemed inclined to begin again; so, instead of (as usual) adjourning to the billiard-room, we agreed to remain in the hall, and smoke our cigars there. We were sitting in a cosy group forming a half-circle round the fire, a table well covered with brandy, whiskey, soda-water, lemon-squash and other preparations for the thirsty soul was placed near us. Major Kindely and I were engaged in an animated discussion on tiger shooting in India, whilst the others smoked their cigars, and were lazily listening to our arguments. Suddenly I felt a cold blast of air sweep over me, and before I had time to look round (thinking the window or door must have been opened) Kindely exclaimed,—

“Edwards, how cold it is! I say, Edwards, is that window open?”



Edwards, who was sitting facing the drawing-room end of the hall, turned round and looked towards the gallery. As he did so an exclamation of horror burst from his lips, and he continued to stare up at the gallery with a look of terror depicted on his face. We all followed the direction of his eyes, and a fearful sight met our gaze! Standing in the centre of the gallery, but not close to the balustrade, was the figure of a man dressed in a loose brown riding-coat of the last century; his right arm was raised as if in menace, but it was his *face*, his awful face that held our horrified gaze! *It was that of a corpse in the last stage of decomposition*; the blue, livid flesh seemed to be dropping off his bones; the thin lips, drawn into a grin, showed the white teeth in a ghastly line; only the eyes were alive, they shone with an unnatural brightness in the dead face, and imparted to it an expression of despairing hatred, dreadful to see; long curling red hair fell to his shoulders.

For the space of half a minute we all sat petrified, staring at this hideous apparition, which, never stirring, kept its gaze fixed beyond us, looking into the distance. At that instant a loud knocking sounded overhead. With a common impulse Edwards and I sprang to our feet; I seized a lighted candle, and we made for the staircase. As we reached the corridor we could see the form gliding



slowly down the passage; it stopped opposite to my room, and then vanished! As we reached my door it was in the act of slowly closing. Pushing it violently open, we entered and gazed around. Nothing was to be seen, but the horrid smell we had perceived before pervaded the whole place, but this time so powerfully that, unable to breathe it, we stepped back into the passage. Here we found the rest of the party, who, on seeing the figure move away, had hastened up-stairs after us.

The whole affair had not taken more than two minutes, from the time we felt the cold blast of air to now, and yet what a state of excitement had those minutes thrown us into!

In answer to my inquiries Major Beach, who seemed even more impressed by the horrid vision than the rest of us, declared that the figure had turned its face from them when we flew to the stair-case. It seemed to glide on as if drawn away, so slowly that they scarcely saw it moving until it was out of sight. What *we* saw was the back of the figure moving with long strides and quickly. It was most incomprehensible, and of course our first idea was that it must have been a hoax. As the horrid charnel-house smell in my room still remained, I re-entered and threw the window wide open, whilst Edwards and two of the others hurried



up-stairs to see if the ladies had been disturbed, or could throw any light on the subject, and also to make sure that they had had nothing to do in creating our alarm. Cohen and I searched most carefully all over my room; we pulled up the carpets, sounded the panels, tested the mantelpiece, looked under and behind the bed, in the large wardrobe—everywhere in fact that it could be possible for a person to hide himself, but quite in vain. As we were at last pausing to consider what was our next best move a tap at the door startled us, and turning round we saw a figure in a blue fur-trimmed dressing-gown, with long golden hair and a piteously frightened face standing just within.

“Oh, Mr. Gaunna,” it said, “I am so frightened! What is it that you have all seen? I cannot stay in that dreadful room alone. Will you ask Mrs. Edwards to come down to me?” and evidently thoroughly terrified, Miss O’Brien burst into tears.

As we hardly knew what to say to comfort the alarmed damsel, it was a great relief to hear the voices of Mrs. Edwards and her sister, who, arrayed in the most becoming *négligé*, had hurried down to try and assist in the *dénouement* of the mystery. Of course Miss O’Brien flew to them at once, and then it transpired that I was not the only one who had been disturbed by extraordinary sounds. Poor



Nellie had been kept awake also by the loud knocking, and disturbed by the wailing cry ; but, afraid of being laughed at, she had kept her terrors to herself. But this night, whilst lying awake, she had felt certain that some one was in the room, standing close by her. When she could summon courage to look round she saw nothing, but at the same instant she heard our steps, and her nose was assailed by a pungent and horrible smell. As she was really very frightened, it was decided that she should sleep with Miss Cohen, and meanwhile the ladies made a careful examination of the room. A door communicated between it and mine, as hers was really the dressing-room, but it was carefully locked, and the key was in Mrs. Edwards's possession. The servants, who had been raised from their evidently deep slumber, had now assembled in very quaint costumes. Edwards had organized a most complete search, in case any one had concealed himself in the house, but all was in vain ; and two hours later we had assembled once more in the hall, as much in the dark as ever. I proposed that whilst the occurrence was still fresh in our minds, we should each write down our own particular impressions of it, and then compare notes. Not being particularly inclined to go to bed, Kindely and I decided that we would sit up in the hall till morning, in case any fresh phantoms should appear.



We sat over the fire talking and smoking, ever and anon glancing up at the corridor, but nothing came to disturb us, and as the clock struck four, feeling chilly and very tired, we at last followed the example of the rest, and sought our couches.

It is needless to say that our chief, indeed our only topic of conversation next morning related to the events of the previous night, and many were the explanations offered, and the plans laid to discover the perpetrator of the hoax, for so we all agreed to designate it; although I believe that in our own minds we regarded it in a different light, though our reason and common sense forbade the actual belief that what we had seen was a visitant from the other world. Had I been alone when I saw the apparition I should certainly have put it down to a disordered imagination, but with the evidence of four corroborative witnesses that was impossible.

Major Beach was very anxious to keep guard with a loaded pistol, and should the figure again appear to first warn and then fire at it. But Edwards would not allow of this, fearing some accident; at the same time he let it be reported in the house that fire-arms would be resorted to in case of any recurrence of the annoying affair. We also compared notes, and in all respects but one they agreed in their description—Major Beach insisted that before the



figure glided away it shook its clenched fist threateningly, and a grim smile distorted its horrid features. No one else, however, had observed this, so it was put down to the effects of an over-heated imagination.

What distressed us all was the determination, put into immediate execution, in spite of entreaties, objections, and even ridicule, of Miss O'Brien to leave Cottenal Court. She was very sorry, she said, and had been so very happy before these horrid sights and sounds had changed everything; but stay she could not, she was simply afraid to do so, and as it really would have been cruel to detain her, at last, though with much reluctance, Mrs. Edwards promised to send her down to the station in time to catch the mid-day train to London. Her departure cast a considerable gloom over us all; she had been so bright and cheery, and our dinner-party that night was far less merry than usual. We spent the greater part of the evening in the billiard-room, and as bed-time drew near some of us did not feel particularly anxious to sit up to watch for the apparition.

Major Beach and Mr. Cohen, however, announced their intention of doing so; the rest of us went up to our rooms a little before twelve o'clock. I was enjoying my first sleep, when it was roughly broken by the door being thrown violently open, and in



rushed Beach and Cohen in a state of great excitement. They seemed thoroughly scared, and it was some time before I could get them to explain what had happened. Their story ran thus:—

After sitting talking and smoking by the fire for over an hour they must have fallen asleep, and when they awoke with a start and a mutual impulse, the lamp had burnt low, and the fire was nearly out. They described the noise that had awakened them to be like the fall of some heavy, solid body close to them; at the same time they heard my room door open with a bang, and they could distinguish a shapeless black mass moving slowly along the corridor. The only description they could give of the mass was, that it resembled a large bundle, but had three bright little lights on or over it. It moved noiselessly out of their sight. As they still sat staring up into the corridor, wondering what next would appear, the curious, thrilling, despairing cry I had heard on the first night of my arrival began overhead, and as it died away the door leading into the drawing-room began slowly to open. Without waiting to see what new surprise was in store for them, they both took to their heels and fled, and as my room was the nearest haven, they made for it; hence the unwelcome interruption to my repose.

Remembering my escapade in the chapel, I felt I



could not reproach them with pusillanimity; at the same time I regretted that they had not waited or gone into the drawing-room to see what had caused the door to open. As to the "rolling mass," as they allowed that the hall was nearly in darkness, and they had only awakened the instant before it appeared, I thought the matter allowed of a simple explanation, but this they indignantly rejected, they "had seen it as plainly as they now saw me."

Having got into my dressing-gown I now descended with them into the hall; but on reaching the drawing-room door we found it not only closed but locked, the key being in the side of the hall. This certainly complicated matters, and as they both swore with great vehemence to having seen the door wide open, it was impossible to disbelieve them. However, after a close search in hall and drawing-room, and having satisfied ourselves that when locked the door could not open by itself, we again had to acknowledge ourselves as much in the dark as ever.

Not wishing to weary my readers by a prolonged account of my stay at Cottenal Court, I will merely relate the last (as far as I was concerned) appearance of the phenomenon. We had sat up several nights in succession, and many were the cleverly-contrived schemes to discover the mystery; but, as nothing



unusual had been seen or heard, we began rather to try to forget it, feeling a little ashamed of the disturbance it had caused amongst us.

It was on a Sunday evening, as we were quietly smoking our cigars in the hall; the conversation had turned upon hunting, when Major Beach, who had risen to help himself from the tray that stood on the small table near, startled us by exclaiming in a loud voice—

“Who are you? What do you want here? If you do not speak I shall fire!”

We all turned towards the gallery, and there, standing full in view, rather bending over the balustrade, was the tall figure of a nun, dressed from head to foot in black, unrelieved except by a white band across the forehead, and an ivory crucifix hanging by her side. She was a tall, large woman, with strongly-marked features, and large, mild, expressionless eyes that seemed to look beyond and over us. She never moved, nor seemed to hear the Major's harangue; and when he seized his unloaded pistol and pointed it full at her, not an eyelid trembled. As we all sat in wonder and amazement staring at the silent figure, as quickly as it appeared, so it vanished. No movement betrayed that it was going; the figure seemed to melt away, and was gone before any of us had recovered sufficiently to speak or move.



A cold blast of air swept through the hall, and this time, passing hastily along the corridor, its arm raised and the same awful expression on its livid, decomposed face, appeared the figure of the man in the brown riding-coat, and hastily following him, with hands raised as if in abject supplication, was the form of another nun with a blood-stained band on her forehead, and uttering as she went the wailing, agonizing cry we had all heard before, and which seemed by its horror and intensity to curdle our blood as we heard it. Edwards sprang to his feet and was up the stairs in an instant, but when he gained the corridor both figures had vanished through my room door. Kindely and I followed him quickly, and we all rushed into my room. The same hateful smell was plainly to be perceived, but nothing, not the faintest indication of the presence of any one could we find.

I pass over the rest, as it would only be wearisome repetition—the arousing of the household, the fruitless search, the vain wonder; but on one thing I was quite determined, and that was, that never again would I sleep in that room, for I could not overcome the distaste I experienced to doing so.

That night I spent in the hall, and the next morning I gladly welcomed a despatch that recalled me to town; and Edwards, who was much annoyed and



distressed by the extraordinary occurrence I have tried to relate, urged me if I could to return, as he was determined to leave no means untried by which he might get some light thrown on the affair. I promised him I would if possible, and the party broke up. There were many expressions of hearty regret at the unsatisfactory ending to our pleasant visit, but I quite believe that in our hearts no one really cared to go through a repetition of our last week's annoyance. To feel oneself thoroughly and inexplicably under the dominion of a supernatural terror, that defies all one's reason and common sense, is not a pleasant experience for any man; and though, after the spectre had vanished, we recovered our self-control, yet while that horrid face glared above us the blood froze in our veins, and a panic of positive terror held us captive.

I had fully intended to return to assist Edwards in his researches; but about a week after my leaving Cottenal Court I got a letter from him, briefly telling me they had altered their plans and were leaving Cottenal Court at once; in fact, he added that before his letter could reach me they would be on their way to town. He added that it was not a subject he cared to refer to again, but that in fact they would not remain any longer in that horrid house. "Call it fancy, imagination, my dear fellow, or what you



will, I have seen sights and heard sounds that are not only inexplicable but terrible! My wife's health is not very good, and I do not care to risk the chance of her being exposed to some horrible shock; so whether the agent be natural or supernatural matters not, the facts remain; and I have forfeited the remainder of my lease, and we shall be away at once." For myself, I never wish to witness any more supernatural horrors.

Subsequently I made some inquiries in the neighbourhood, but was informed that Cottenal Court was shut up after the departure of mine host, and has remained so ever since. Thus ends my story, and unsatisfactorily, I have always felt; but I cannot pretend to give you any explanation, as I do not believe there is any.

A few more words on the subject, and I have done. I have heard since that ever since Cottenal Court had passed out of the hands of its old possessors it had acquired a bad reputation; no purchaser having kept it for long, and some misfortune seemed to follow all those who invested in it. The present owner had let it, but his two previous tenants had given it up before the expiration of their lease; and it was reported in the county that no one could rest at night in certain parts of the house, on account of the noise of loud knocking so constantly heard. This,

with a few vague hints, was all the information I could glean, so I have given up the matter in despair ; but should any of my readers, after going through the account as I have here stated it, be able to throw any light upon it, I shall not consider that my story of 'The Ghosts of Cottenal Court' has been written in vain.



## A DEBT OF HONOUR.

### A GHOST STORY.

HUSH! what was that cry, so low but yet so piercing, so strange but yet so sorrowful? It was not the marmot upon the side of the Righi—it was not the heron down by the lake; no, it was distinctively human. Hush! there it is again—from the churchyard which I have just left!

Not ten minutes have elapsed since I was sitting on the low wall of the churchyard of Weggis, watching the calm glories of the moonlight illuminating with silver splendour the Lake of Lucerne; and I am certain there was no one within the enclosure but myself.

I am mistaken, surely. What a silence there is upon the night! Not a breath of air now to break up into a thousand brilliant ripples the long reflection of the August moon, or to stir the foliage of the chestnuts; not a voice in the village; no splash of

oar upon the lake. All life seems at perfect rest, and the solemn stillness that reigns about the topmost glaciers of St. Gothard has spread its mantle over the warmer world below.

I must not linger; as it is, I shall have to wake up the porter to let me into the hotel. I hurry on.

Not ten paces, though. Again I hear the cry. This time it sounds to me like the long sad sob of a wearied and broken heart. Without staying to reason with myself, I quickly retrace my steps.

I stumble about among the iron crosses and the graves, and displace in my confusion wreaths of immortelles and fresher flowers. A huge mausoleum stands between me and the wall upon which I had been sitting not a quarter of an hour ago. The mausoleum casts a deep shadow upon the side nearest to me. Ah! something is stirring there. I strain my eyes—the figure of a man passes slowly out of the shade, and silently occupies my place upon the wall. It must have been his lips that gave out that miserable sound.

What shall I do? Compassion and curiosity are strong. The man whose heart can be rent so sorely ought not to be allowed to linger here with his despair. He is gazing, as I did, upon the lake. I mark his profile—clear-cut and symmetrical; I catch the lustre of large eyes. The face, as I can see



it, seems very still and placid. I may be mistaken; he may merely be a wanderer like myself; perhaps he heard the three strange cries, and has also come to seek the cause. I feel impelled to speak to him.

I pass from the path by the church to the east side of the mausoleum, and so come towards him, the moon full upon his features. Great heaven! how pale his face is!

"Good evening, sir. I thought myself alone here, and wondered that no other travellers had found their way to this lovely spot. Charming, is it not?"

For a moment he says nothing, but his eyes are full upon me. At last he replies—

"It is charming as you say, Mr. Reginald Westcar."

"You know me?" I exclaim, in astonishment.

"Pardon me, I can scarcely claim a personal acquaintance. But yours is the only English name entered to-day in the *Livre des Etrangers*."

"You are staying at the 'Hôtel de la Concorde,' then?"

An inclination of the head is all the answer vouchsafed.

"May I ask," I continue, "whether you heard just now a very strange cry repeated three times?"

A pause. The lustrous eyes seem to search me through and through—I can hardly bear their gaze. Then he replies—

"I fancy I heard the echoes of some such sounds as you describe."

The *echoes*! Is this, then, the man who gave utterance to those cries of woe? is it possible? The face seems so passionless; but the pallor of those features bears witness to some terrible agony within.

"I thought some one must be in distress," I rejoin hastily, "and I hurried back to see if I could be of any service."

"Very good of you," he answers coldly; "but surely such a place as this is not unaccustomed to the voice of sorrow."

"No doubt. My impulse was a mistaken one."

"But kindly meant. You will not sleep less soundly for acting on that impulse, Reginald Westcar."

He rises as he speaks. He throws his cloak round him, and stands motionless. I take the hint. My mysterious countryman wishes to be alone. Some one that he has loved and lost lies buried here.

"Good night, sir," I say, as I move in the direction of the little chapel at the gate. "Neither of us will sleep the less soundly for thinking of the perfect repose that reigns around this place."

"What do you mean?" he asks.

"The dead," I reply, as I stretch my hand towards the graves. "Do you not remember the lines of Macbeth?"



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‘After life’s fitful fever he sleeps well.’”

“But *you* have never died, Reginald Westcar. You know nothing of the sleep of death.”

For the third time he speaks my name almost familiarly, and—I know not why—a shudder passes through me. I have no time, in my turn, to ask him what he means; for he strides silently away into the shadow of the church, and I, with a strange sense of oppression upon me, return to my hotel.

The events which I have just related passed in vivid recollection through my mind as I travelled northward one cold November day in the year 185-. About six months previously I had taken my degree at Oxford, and had since been enjoying a trip upon the Continent; and on my return to London I found a letter awaiting me from my lawyers, informing me, somewhat to my astonishment, that I had succeeded to a small estate in Cumberland. I must tell you exactly how this came about. My mother was a Miss Ringwood, and she was the youngest of three children; the eldest was Aldina, the second was Geoffrey, and the third (my mother) Alice. Their mother (who had been a widow since my mother’s birth) lived at this little place in Cumberland, and which was known as The Shallows; she died shortly after my mother’s marriage with my father,



Captain Westcar. My Aunt Aldina and my Uncle Geoffrey—the one at that time aged twenty-eight, and the other twenty-six—continued to reside at The Shallows. My father and mother had to go to India, where I was born, and where, when quite a child, I was left an orphan. A few months after my mother's marriage my aunt disappeared; a few weeks after that event, and my Uncle Geoffrey dropped down dead, as he was playing at cards with Mr. Maryon, the proprietor of a neighbouring mansion known as The Mere. A fortnight after my uncle's death, my Aunt Aldina returned to The Shallows, and never left it again till she was carried out in her coffin to her grave in the churchyard. Ever since her return from her mysterious disappearance she maintained an impenetrable reserve. As a school-boy I visited her twice or thrice, but these visits depressed my youthful spirits to such an extent, that as I grew older I excused myself from accepting my aunt's not very pressing invitations; and at the time I am now speaking of I had not seen her for eight or ten years. I was rather surprised, therefore, when she bequeathed me The Shallows, which, as the surviving child, she inherited under her mother's marriage settlement.

But The Shallows had always exercised a grim influence over me, and the knowledge that I was



now going to it as my home oppressed me. The road seemed unusually dark, cold, and lonely. At last I passed the lodge, and two hundred yards more brought me to the porch. Very soon the door was opened by an elderly female, whom I we'll remembered as having been my aunt's housekeeper and cook. I had pleasant recollections of her, and was glad to see her. To tell the truth, I had not anticipated my visit to my newly-acquired property with any great degree of enthusiasm; but a very tolerable dinner had an inspiring effect, and I was pleased to learn that there was a bin of old madeira in the cellar. Naturally I soon grew cheerful, and consequently talkative; and summoned Mrs. Balk for a little gossip. The substance of what I gathered from her rather diffusive conversation was as follows:—

My aunt had resided at The Shallows ever since the death of my Uncle Geoffrey, but she had maintained a silent and reserved habit; and Mrs. Balk was of opinion that she had had some great misfortune. She had persistently refused all intercourse with the people at The Mere. Squire Maryon, himself a cold and taciturn man, had once or twice showed a disposition to be friendly, but she had sternly repulsed all such overtures. Mrs. Balk was of opinion that Miss Ringwood was not "quite right,"



as she expressed it, on some topics; especially did she seem impressed with the idea that *The Mere* ought to belong to her. It appeared that the Ringwoods and Maryons were distant connections; that *The Mere* belonged in former times to a certain Sir Henry Benet; that he was a bachelor, and that Squire Maryon's father and old Mr. Ringwood were cousins of his, and that there was some doubt as to which was the real heir; that Sir Henry, who disliked old Maryon, had frequently said he had set any chance of dispute at rest, by bequeathing *The Mere* property by will to Mr. Ringwood, my mother's father; that on his death, no such will could be found; and the family lawyers agreed that Mr. Maryon was the legal inheritor, and my Uncle Geoffrey and his sister must be content to take *The Shallows*, or nothing at all. Mr. Maryon was comparatively rich, and the Ringwoods poor, consequently they were advised not to enter upon a costly lawsuit. My Aunt Aldina maintained to the last that Sir Henry had made a will, and that Mr. Maryon knew it, but had destroyed or suppressed the document. I did not gather from Mrs. Balk's narrative that Miss Ringwood had any foundation for her belief, and I dismissed the notion at once as baseless.

“And my Uncle Geoffrey died of apoplexy, you say, Mrs. Balk?”



"I don't say so, sir, no more did Miss Ringwood; but *they* said so."

"Whom do you mean by *they*?"

"The people at The Mere—the young doctor, a friend of Squire Maryon's who was brought over from York, and the rest; he fell heavily from the chair, and his head struck against the fender."

"Playing at cards with Mr. Maryon, I think you said."

"Yes, sir; he was too fond of cards, I believe, was Mr. Geoffrey."

"Is Mr. Maryon seen much in the county—is he hospitable?"

"Well, sir, he goes up to London a good deal, and has some friends down from town occasionally; but he does not seem to care much about the people in the neighbourhood."

"He has some children, Mrs. Balk?"

"Only one daughter, sir; a sweet pretty thing she is. Her mother died when Miss Agnes was born."

"You have no idea, Mrs. Balk, what my Aunt Aldina's great misfortune was?"

"Well, sir, I can't help thinking it must have been a love affair. She always hated men so much."

"Then why did she leave The Shallows to me, Mrs. Balk?"

"Ah, you are laughing, sir. No doubt she

considered that The Mere ought to belong to you, as the heir of the Ringwoods, and she placed you here, as near as might be to the place."

"In hopes that I might marry Miss Maryon, eh, Mrs. Balk?"

"You are laughing again, sir. I don't imagine she thought so much of that, as of the possibility of your discovering something about the missing will."

I bade the communicative Mrs. Balk good night, and retired to my bedroom—a low, wide, sombre oak-panelled chamber. I must confess that family stories had no great interest for me, living apart from them at school and college as I had done; and as I undressed I thought more of the probabilities of sport the eight hundred acres of wild shooting belonging to The Shallows would afford me, than of the supposed will my poor aunt had evidently worried herself about so much. Thoroughly tired after my long journey, I soon fell fast asleep amid the deep shadows of the huge four-poster I mentally resolved to chop up into firewood at an early date, and substitute for it a more modern iron bedstead.

How long I had been asleep I do not know, but I suddenly started up, the echo of a long sad cry ringing in my ears.

I listened eagerly—sensitive to the slightest sound



—painfully sensitive as one is only in the deep silence of the night.

I heard the old-fashioned clock I had noticed on the stairs strike three. The reverberation seemed to last a long time, then all was silent again. “A dream,” I muttered to myself, as I lay down upon the pillow; “madeira is a heating wine. But what can I have been dreaming of?”

Sleep seemed to have gone altogether, and the busy mind wandered among the continental scenes I had lately visited. By-and-by I found myself in memory once more within the Weggis churchyard. I was satisfied; I had traced my dream to the cries that I had heard there. I turned round to sleep again. Perhaps I fell into a doze—I cannot say; but again I started up at the repetition, as it seemed outside my window, of that cry of sadness and despair. I hastily drew aside the heavy curtains of my bed—at that moment the room seemed to be illuminated with a dim unearthly light—and I saw gradually growing into human shape the figure of a woman. I recognized in it my aunt, Miss Ringwood. Horror-struck, I gazed at the apparition; it advanced a little—the lips moved—I heard it distinctly say:

“*Reginald Westcar, The Mere belongs to you. Compel John Maryon to pay the debt of honour!*”

I fell back senseless.



When next I returned to consciousness, it was when I was called in the morning; the shutters were opened, and I saw the red light of the dawning winter sun.

There is a strange sympathy between the night and the mind. All one's troubles represent themselves as increased a hundredfold if one wakes in the night, and begins to think about them. A muscular pain becomes the certainty of an incurable internal disease; and a headache suggests incipient softening of the brain. But all these horrors are dissipated with the morning light, and the after-glow of a cold bath turns them into jokes. So it was with me on the morning after my arrival at The Shallows. I accounted most satisfactorily for all that had occurred, or seemed to have occurred, during the night; and resolved that though the old madeira was uncommonly good, I must be careful in future not to drink more than a couple of glasses after dinner. I need scarcely say that I said nothing to Mrs. Balk of my bad dreams, and shortly after breakfast I took my gun and went out in search of such game as I might chance to meet with. At three o'clock I sent the keeper home, as his capacious pockets were pretty well filled, telling him that I thought I knew the country, and should stroll back leisurely.



The gray gloom of the November evening was spreading over the sky as I came upon a small plantation which I believed belonged to me. I struck straight across it; emerging from its shadows, I found myself by a small stream and some marshy land; on the other side another small plantation. A snipe got up; I fired, and tailored it. I marked the bird into this other plantation, and followed. Up got a covey of partridges—bang, bang!—one down by the side of an oak. I was about to enter this covert, when a lady and gentleman emerged, and, struck with the unpleasant thought that I was possibly trespassing, I at once went forward to apologize.

Before I could say a word, the gentleman addressed me.

“May I ask, sir, if I have given you permission to shoot over my preserves?”

“I beg to express my great regret, sir,” I replied, as I lifted my hat in acknowledgment of the lady’s presence, “that I should have trespassed upon your land. I can only plead, as my excuse, that I fully believed I was still upon the manor belonging to The Shallows.”

“Gentlemen who go out shooting ought to know the limits of their estates,” he answered harshly; “the boundaries of The Shallows are well defined, nor is the area they contain so very extensive. You



have no right upon this side of the stream, sir; oblige me by returning."

I merely bowed, for I was nettled by his tone, and as I turned away I noticed that ~~the~~ young lady whispered to him.

"One moment, sir," he said. "My daughter suggests the possibility of your being the new owner of The Shallows. May I ask if this is so?"

It had not occurred to me before, but I understood in a moment to whom I had been speaking, and I replied:

"Yes, Mr. Maryon—my name is Westcar."

Such was my introduction to Mr. and Miss Maryon. The proprietor of The Mere appeared to be a gentleman, but his manners were cold and reserved, and a careful observer might have remarked a perpetual restlessness in the eyes, as if they were physically incapable of regarding the same object for more than a moment. He was about sixty years of age, apparently; and though he now and again made an effort to carry himself upright, the head and shoulders soon drooped again, as if the weight of years, and, it might be, the memory of the past, were a heavy load to carry. Of Miss Maryon it is sufficient to say that she was nineteen or twenty, and it did not need a second glance to satisfy me that her beauty was of no ordinary kind.



I must hurry over the records of the next few weeks. I became a frequent visitor at The Mere. Mr. Maryon's manner never became cordial, but he did not seem displeased to see me; and as to Agnes, well, she certainly was not displeased either.

I think it was on Christmas-day that I suddenly discovered that I was desperately in love. Miss Maryon had been for two or three days confined to her room by a bad cold, and I found myself in a great state of anxiety to see her again. I am sorry to say that my thoughts wandered a good deal when I was at church upon that festival, and I could not help thinking what ample room there was for a bridal procession up the spacious aisle. Suddenly my eyes rested upon a mural tablet, inscribed, "To the memory of Aldina Ringwood." Then with a cold thrill there came back upon me what I had almost forgotten, the dream, or whatever it was, that had occurred on that first night at The Shallows; and those strange words—"The Mere belongs to you. Compel John Maryon to pay the debt of honour!" Nothing but the remembrance of Agnes' sweet face availed for the time to banish the vision, the statement, and the bidding.

Miss Maryon was soon down-stairs again. Did I flatter myself too much in thinking that she was as glad to see me as I was to see her? No—I felt sure



that I did not. Then I began to reflect seriously upon my position. My fortune was small—quite enough for me, but not enough for two; and as she was heiress of The Mere and a comfortable rent-roll of some six or eight thousand a year, was it not natural that Mr. Maryon expected her to make what is called “a good match”? Still, I could not conceal from myself the fact, that he evinced no objection whatever to my frequent visits at his house, nor to my taking walks with his daughter when he was unable to accompany us.

One bright frosty day I had been down to the lake with Miss Maryon, and had enjoyed the privilege of teaching her to skate; and on returning to the house, we met Mr. Maryon upon the terrace. He walked with us to the conservatory; we went in to examine the plants, and he remained outside, pacing up and down the terrace. Both Agnes and myself were strangely silent; perhaps my tongue had found an eloquence upon the ice which was well met by as hy thoughtfulness upon her part. But there was a lovely colour upon her cheeks, and I experienced a very considerable and unusual fluttering about my heart. It happened that as we were standing at the door of the conservatory, both of us silently looking away from the flowers upon the frosty view, our eyes lighted at the same time upon



Mr. Maryon. He too was apparently regarding the prospect, when suddenly he paused and staggered back, as if something unexpected met his gaze.

"Oh, poor papa! I hope he is not going to have one of his fits!" exclaimed Agnes.

"Fits! Is he subject to such attacks?" I inquired.

"Not ordinary fits," she answered hurriedly; "I hardly know how to explain them. They come upon him occasionally, and generally at this period of the year."

"Shall we go to him?" I suggested.

"No; you cannot help him; and he cannot bear that they should be noticed."

We both watched him. His arms were stretched up above his head, and again he recoiled a step or two. I sought for an explanation in Agnes' face.

"A stranger!" she exclaimed. "Who can it be?"

I looked toward Mr. Maryon. A tall figure of a man had come from the farther side of the house; he wore a large loose coat and a kind of military cap upon his head.

"Doubtless you are surprised to see me, John," we heard the new-comer say, in a confidential voice, "but I am not the devil, man, that you should greet me with such a peculiar attitude." He held out his hand, and continued, "Come, don't let the warmth of old fellowship be all on one side, this wintry day."

We could see that Mr. Maryon took the proffered right hand with his left for an instant, then seemed to shrink away, but exchanged no word of this greeting.

"I don't understand this," said Agnes; and we both hurried forward.

The stranger, seeing Agnes approach, lifted his cap.

"Ah, your daughter, John no doubt. I see the likeness to her lamented mother. Pray introduce me."

Mr. Maryon's usually pallid features had assumed a still paler hue, and he said, in a low voice:

"Colonel Bludyer—my daughter."

Agnes barely bowed.

"Charmed to renew your acquaintance, Miss Maryon. When last I saw you, you were quite a baby; but your father and I are very old friends—are we not, John?"

Mr. Maryon vaguely nodded his head.

"Well, John, you have often pressed your hospitality upon me, but till now I have never had an opportunity of availing myself of your kind offers; so I have brought my bag, and intend at last to give you the pleasure of my company for a few days."

I certainly should have thought that a man of Mr. Maryon's disposition would have resented such



conduct as this, or, at all events, have given this self-invited guest a chilling welcome. Mr. Maryon, however, in a confused and somewhat stammering tone, said that he was glad Colonel Bludyer had come at last, and bade his daughter go and make the necessary arrangements. Agnes, in silent astonishment, entered the house, and then Mr. Maryon turned to me hastily and bade me good-bye. In a by no means comfortable frame of mind I returned to The Shallows.

The sudden advent of this miscellaneous Colonel was naturally somewhat irritating to me. Not only did I regard the man as an intolerable bore, but I could not help fancying that he was something more than an old friend of Mr. Maryon's; in fact I was led to judge by Mr. Maryon's strange conduct that this Bludyer had some power over him which might be exercised to the detriment of the Maryon family, and I was convinced there was some mystery it was my business to penetrate.

The following day I went up to The Mere to see if Miss Maryon was desirous of renewing her skating lesson. I found the party in the billiard-room, Agnes marking for her father and the Colonel. Mr. Maryon, whom I knew to be an exceptionally good player, seemed incapable of making a decent stroke; the Colonel, on the other hand, could evidently give



a professional fifteen, and beat him easily. We all went down to the lake together. I had no chance of any quiet conversation with Agnes; the Colonel was perpetually beside us.

I returned home disgusted. For two whole days I did not go near The Mere. On the third day I went up, hoping that the horrid Colonel would be gone. It was beginning to snow when I left The Shallows at about two o'clock in the afternoon, and Mrs. Balk foretold a heavy storm, and bade me not be late returning.

The black winter darkness in the sky deepened as I approached The Mere. I was ushered again into the billiard-room. Agnes was marking, as upon the previous occasion, but two days had worked a sad difference in her face. Mr. Maryon hardly noticed my entrance; he was flushed, and played eagerly; the Colonel was boisterous, declaring that John had never played better twenty years ago. I relieved Agnes of the duty of marking. The snow fell in a thick layer upon the skylight, and the Colonel became seriously anxious about my return home. As I did not think he was the proper person to give me hints, I resolutely remained where I was, encouraged in my behaviour by the few words I gained from Agnes, and by the looks of entreaty she gave me. I had always considered Mr. Maryon to be an abstemious



man, but he drank a good deal of brandy-and-soda during the long game of seven hundred up, and when he succeeded in beating the Colonel by forty-three, he was in roaring spirits, and insisted upon my staying to dinner. Need I say that I accepted the invitation?

I made such a toilette as I could in a most unattainable chamber that was allotted to me, and hurried back to the drawing-room in the hope that I might get a few private words with Agnes. I was not disappointed. She, too, had hurried down, and in a few words I learned that this abominable Bludyer was paying her his coarse attentions, and with, apparently, the full consent of Mr. Maryon. My indignation was unbounded. Was it possible that Mr. Maryon intended to sacrifice this fair creature to that repulsive man?

Mr. Maryon had appeared in excellent spirits when dinner began, and the first glass or two of champagne made him merrier than I thought it possible for him to be. But by the time the dessert was on the table he had grown silent and thoughtful; nor did he respond to the warm eulogiums the Colonel passed upon the magnum of claret which was set before us.

After dinner we sat in the library. The Colonel left the room to fetch some cigars he had been



loudly extolling. Then Agnes had an opportunity of whispering to me.

“Look at papa—see how strangely he sits—his hands clenching the arms of the chair, his eyes fixed upon the blazing coals! How old he seems to be to-night! His terrible fits are coming on—he is always like this toward the end of January!” The Colonel’s return put an end to any further confidential talk.

When we separated for the night, I felt that my going to bed would be purposeless. I felt most painfully wide awake. I threw myself down upon my bed, and worried myself by trying to imagine what secret there could be between Maryon and Bludyer—for that a secret of some kind existed, I felt certain. I tossed about till I heard the stroke of one. A dreadful restlessness had come upon me. It seemed as if the solemn night-side of life was busy waking now, but the silence and solitude of my antique chamber became too much for me. I rose from my bed, and paced up and down the room. I raked up the dying embers of the fire, and drew an arm-chair to the hearth. I fell into a doze. By-and-by I woke up suddenly, and I was conscious of stealthy footsteps in the passage. My sense of hearing became painfully acute. I heard the footsteps retreating down the corridor, until they were lost in



the distance. I cautiously opened the door, and, shading the candle with my hand, looked out. There was nothing to be seen; but I felt that I could not remain quietly in my room, and closing the door behind me, I went out in search of I knew not what.

The sitting-rooms and bedrooms in ordinary use at The Mere were in the modern part of the house, but there was an old Elizabethan wing which I had often longed to explore, and in this strange ramble of mine I soon had reason to be satisfied that I was well within it. At the end of an oak-panelled narrow passage a door stood open, and I entered a low sombre apartment fitted with furniture in the style of two hundred years ago. There was something awfully ghostly about the look of this room. A great four-post bedstead, with heavy hangings, stood in a deep recess; a round oak table and two high-backed chairs were in the centre of the room. Suddenly, as I gazed on these things, I heard stealthy footsteps in the passage, and saw a dim light advancing. Acting on a sudden impulse, I extinguished my candle and withdrew into the shadow of the recess, watching eagerly. The footsteps came nearer. My heart seemed to stand still with expectation. They paused outside the door, for a moment really—for an age it seemed to me. Then, to my astonishment,



I saw Mr. Maryon enter. He carried a small night-lamp in his hand. Another glance satisfied me that he was walking in his sleep. He came straight to the round table, and set down the lamp. He seated himself in one of the high-backed chairs, his vacant eyes staring at the chair opposite; then his lips began to move quickly, as if he were addressing some one. Then he rose, went to the bureau, and seemed to take something from it; then he sat down again. What a strange action of his hands! At first I could not understand it; then it flashed upon me that in this dream of his he must be shuffling cards. Yes, he began to deal; then he was playing with his adversary, his lips moving anxiously at times.

A look of terrible eagerness came over the sleep-walker's countenance. With nimble fingers he dealt the cards, and played. Suddenly with a sweep of his hands he seemed to fling the pack into the fireplace, started from his seat, grappled with his unseen adversary, raised his powerful right hand, and struck a tremendous blow. Hush! more footsteps along the passage! Am I deceived? From my concealment I watch for what is to follow. Colonel Bludyer comes in, half dressed but wide awake.

"You maniac!" I hear him mutter: "I expected you were given to such tricks as these. Lucky for



you no eyes but mine have seen your abject folly. Come back to your room."

Mr. Maryon is still gazing, his arms lifted wildly above his head, upon the imagined foe whom he had felled to the ground. The Colonel touches him on the shoulder, and leads him away, leaving the lamp. My reasoning faculties had fully returned to me. I held a clue to the secret, and for Agnes' sake it must be followed up. I took the lamp away, and placed it on the table where the chamber candlesticks stood, relit my own candle, and found my way back to my bedroom.

The next morning, when I came down to breakfast, I found Colonel Bludyer warming himself satisfactorily at the blazing fire. I learned from him that our host was far from well, and that Miss Maryon was in attendance upon her father; that the Colonel was charged with all kinds of apologies to me, and good wishes for my safe return home across the snow. I thanked him for the delivery of the message, while I felt perfectly convinced that he had never been charged with it. However that might be, I never saw Mr. Maryon that morning; and I started back to The Shallows through the snow.

For the next two or three days the weather was very wild, but I contrived to get up to The Mere, and ask after Mr. Maryon. Better, I was told, but



unable to see any one. Miss Maryon, too, was fatigued with nursing her father. So there was nothing to do but to trudge home again.

*Reginald Westcar, The Mere belongs to you. Compel John Maryon to pay the debt of honour!*

Again and again these words forced themselves upon me, as I listlessly gazed out upon the white landscape. The strange scene that I had witnessed on that memorable night I passed beneath Mr. Maryon's roof had brought them back to my memory with redoubled force, and I began to think that the apparition I had seen—or dreamed of—on my first night at The Shallows had more of truth in it than I had been willing to believe.

Three more days passed away, and a carter-boy from The Mere brought me a note. It was Agnes' handwriting. It said:

"Dear Mr. Westcar,—Pray come up here, if you possibly can. I cannot understand what is the matter with papa; and he wishes me to do a dreadful thing. Do come. I feel that I have no friend but you. I am obliged to send this note privately."

I need scarcely say that five minutes afterwards I was plunging through the snow towards The Mere. It was already late on that February evening as I gained the shrubbery; and as I was pondering upon the best method of securing admittance, I became



aware that the figure of a man was hurrying on some yards in front of me. At first I thought it must be one of the gardeners, but all of a sudden I stood still, and my blood seemed to freeze with horror as I remarked that the figure in front of me *left no trace of footmarks on the snow!* My brain reeled for a moment, and I thought I should have fallen; but I recovered my nerves, and when I looked before me again, it had disappeared. I pressed on eagerly. I arrived at the front door—it was wide open; and I passed through the hall to the library. I heard Agnes' voice.

“No, no, papa. You must not force me to this! I cannot—will not—marry Colonel Bludyer!”

“You *must*,” answered Mr. Maryon, in a hoarse voice; “you *must* marry him, and save your father from something worse than disgrace!”

Not feeling disposed to play the eavesdropper, I entered the room. Mr. Maryon was standing at the fireplace, Agnes was crouching on the ground at his feet. I saw at once that it was no use for me to dissemble the reason of my visit, and, without a word of greeting, I said:

“Miss Maryon, I have come in obedience to your summons. If I can prevent any misfortune from falling upon you I am ready to help you with my life. You have guessed that I love you. If my love



is returned I am prepared to dispute my claim with any man."

Agnes, with a cry of joy, rose from her knees, and rushed towards me. Ah! how strong I felt as I held her in my arms!

"I have my answer," I continued. "Mr. Maryon, I have reason to believe that your daughter is in fear of the future you have forecast for her. I ask you to regard those fears, and to give her to me, to love and cherish as my wife."

Mr. Maryon covered his face with his hands; and I could hear him murmur, "Too late—too late!"

"No, not too late," I echoed. "What is this Bludyer to you, that you should sacrifice your daughter to a man whose very look proclaims him a villain? Nothing can compel you to such a deed—not even *a debt of honour!*"

What it was impelled me to say these last words I know not, but they had an extraordinary effect upon Mr. Maryon. He started towards me, then checked himself: his face was livid, his eyeballs glaring, and he threw up his arms in the strange manner I had already witnessed.

"What is all this?" exclaimed a harsh voice behind me. "Mr. Westcar insulting Miss Maryon and her father! It is time for me to interfere." And Colonel Bludyer approached me menacingly.



All his jovial manner and fulsome courtesy were gone; and in his flushed face and insolent look the savage rascal was revealed.

"You will interfere at your peril," I replied. "I am a younger man than you are, and my strength has not been weakened by drink and dissipation. Take care."

The villain drew himself up to his full height; and though he must have been at least some sixty years of age, I felt assured that I should meet with no ordinary adversary if a personal struggle should ensue. Agnes fainted, and I laid her on a sofa.

"Miss Maryon wants air," said the Colonel, in a calmer voice. "Excuse me, Mr. Maryon, if I open a window." He tore open the shutters, and threw up the sash. "And now, Mr. Westcar, unless you are prepared to be sensible, and make your exit by the door, I shall be under the unpleasant necessity of throwing you out of the window."

The ruffian advanced toward me as he spoke. Suddenly he paused. His jaw dropped; his hair seemed literally to stand on end; his white lips quivered; he shook as with an ague; his whole form appeared to shrink. I stared in amazement at the awful change. A strange thrill shot through me, as I heard a quiet voice say:



“Richard Bludyer, your grave is waiting for you. Go.”

The figure of a man passed between me and him. The wretched man shrank back, and with a wild cry, leaped from the window he had opened.

All this time Mr. Maryon was standing like a lifeless statue. In helpless wonder I gazed at the figure before me. I saw clearly the features in profile, and swift as lightning, my memory was carried back to the unforgotten scene in the churchyard upon the Lake of Lucerne, and I recognized the white face of the young man with whom I there had spoken.

“John Maryon,” said the voice, “this is the night upon which, a quarter of a century ago, you killed me. It is your last night on earth. You must go through the tragedy again.”

Mr. Maryon, still statue-like, beckoned to the figure, and opened a half-concealed door which led into his study. The strange but opportune visitant seemed to motion to me with a gesture of his hand, which I felt I must obey, and I followed in this weird procession. From the study we mounted by a private staircase to a large well-furnished bed-chamber. Here we paused. Mr. Maryon looked tremblingly at the stranger, and said, in a low stammering voice :



“This is my room. In this room, on this night, twenty-five years ago, you told me that you were certain Sir Henry Benet’s will was in existence, and that you had made up your mind to dispute my possession to this property. You had discovered letters from Sir Henry to your father which gave you a clue to the spot where that will might be found. You, Geoffrey Ringwood, of generous and extravagant nature, offered to find the will in my presence. It was late at night, as now; all the household slept. I accepted your invitation, and followed you.”

Mr. Maryon ceased; he seemed physically unable to continue. The terrible stranger, in his low echoing voice, replied :

“Go on ; confess all.”

“You and I, Geoffrey, had been what the world calls friends. We had been much in London together; we were both passionately fond of cards. We had a common acquaintance, Richard Bludyer. He was present on the 2nd of February, when I lost a large sum of money to you at *écarté*. He hinted to me that you might possibly use these sums in instituting a lawsuit against me for the recovery of this estate. Your intimation that you knew of the existence of the will alarmed me, as it had become necessary for me to remain owner of The Mere. As



I have said, I accepted your invitation, and followed you to Sir Henry Benet's room; and now I follow you again."

As he said these words, Geoffrey Ringwood, or his ghost, passed silently by Mr. Maryon, and led the way into the corridor. At the end of the corridor all three paused outside an oak door, which I remembered well. A gesture from the leader made Mr. Maryon continue:

"On this threshold you told me suddenly that Bludyer was a villain, and had betrayed your sister Aldina; that she had fled with him that night; that he could never marry her, as you had reason to know he had a wife alive. You made me swear to help you in your vengeance against him. We entered the room, as we enter it now."

Our leader had opened the door of the room, and we were in the same chamber I had wandered to when I had slept at The Mere. The figure of Geoffrey Ringwood paused at the round table, and looked again at Mr. Maryon, who proceeded:

"You went straight to the fifth panel from the fireplace, and then touched a spring, and the panel opened. You said that the will giving this property to your father and his heirs was to be found there. I was convinced that you spoke the truth, but, suddenly remembering your love of gambling, I



suggested that we should play for it. You accepted at once. We searched among the papers, and found the will. We placed the will upon the table, and began to play. We agreed that we would play up to ten thousand pounds. Your luck was marvellous. In two hours the limit was reached. I owed you ten thousand pounds, and had lost The Mere. You laughed and said, 'Well, John, you have had a fair chance. At ten o'clock this morning I shall expect you to pay me *your debt of honour*.' I rose; the devil of despair strong upon me. With one hand I swept the cards from the table into the fire, and with the other seized you by the throat, and dealt you a blow upon the temple. You fell dead upon the floor."

Need I say that, as I heard this fearful narrative, I recognized the actions of the sleep-walker, and understood them all?

"To the end!" said the hollow voice. "Confess to the end!"

"The doctor who examined your body gave his opinion, at the inquest, that you had died of apoplexy, caused by strong cerebral excitement. My evidence was to the effect that I believed you had lost a large sum of money to Captain Bludyer, and that you had told me you were utterly unable to pay it. The jury found their verdict accordingly, and I was left



in undisturbed possession of The Mere. But the memory of my crime haunted me as only such memories can haunt a criminal, and I became a morose and miserable man. One thing bound me to life—my daughter. When Reginald Westcar appeared upon the scene I thought that the debt of honour would be satisfied if he married Agnes. Then Bludyer reappeared, and he told me that he knew that I had killed you. He threatened to revive the story, to exhume your body, and to say that Aldina Ringwood had told him all about the will. I could purchase his silence only by giving him my daughter, the heiress of The Mere. To this I consented.”

As he said these last words, Mr. Maryon sank heavily into the chair.

The figure of Geoffrey Ringwood placed one ghostly hand upon his left temple, and then passed silently out of the room. I started up, and followed the phantom along the corridor—down the staircase—out at the front door, which still stood open—across the snow-covered lawn—into the plantation; and then it disappeared as strangely as I first had seen it; and, hardly knowing whether I was mad or dreaming, I found my way back to The Shallows.

For some weeks I was ill with brain-fever. When



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I recovered I was told that terrible things had happened at The Mere. Mr. Maryon had been found dead in Sir Henry Benet's room—an effusion of blood upon the brain, the doctor said—and the body of Colonel Bludyer had been discovered in the snow in an old disused gravel-pit not far from the house.

A year afterwards I married Agnes Maryon; and, if all that I had seen and heard upon that 3rd of February was not merely the invention of a fevered brain, the debt of honour was at last discharged, for I, the nephew of the murdered Geoffrey Ringwood, became the owner of The Mere.

## THE GREAT KEINPLATZ EXPERIMENT.\*

OF all the sciences which have puzzled the sons of man, none had such an attraction for the learned Professor von Baumgarten as those which relate to psychology and the ill-defined relations between mind and matter. A celebrated anatomist, a profound chemist, and one of the first physiologists in Europe, it was a relief for him to turn from these subjects and to bring his varied knowledge to bear upon the study of the soul and the mysterious relationship of spirits. At first, when as a young man he began to dip into the secrets of mesmerism, his mind seemed to be wandering in a strange land where all was chaos and darkness, save that here and there some great unexplainable and disconnected fact loomed out in front of him. As the years passed, however, and as the worthy Professor's stock of knowledge increased, for knowledge begets knowledge as money bears interest, much which had

\* Originally published in 'Belgravia.' 3



seemed strange and unaccountable began to take another shape in his eyes. New trains of reasoning became familiar to him, and he perceived connecting links where all had been incomprehensible and startling. By experiments which extended over twenty years, he obtained a basis of facts upon which it was his ambition to build up a new exact science which should embrace mesmerism, spiritualism, and all cognate subjects. In this he was much helped by his intimate knowledge of the more intricate parts of animal physiology which treat of nerve currents and the working of the brain; for Alexis von Baumgarten was Regius Professor of Physiology at the University of Keinplatz, and had all the resources of the laboratory to aid him in his profound researches.

Professor von Baumgarten was tall and thin, with a hatchet face and steel-gray eyes, which were singularly bright and penetrating. Much thought had furrowed his forehead and contracted his heavy eyebrows, so that he appeared to wear a perpetual frown, which often misled people as to his character, for though austere he was tender-hearted. He was popular among the students, who would gather round him after his lectures and listen eagerly to his strange theories. Often he would call for volunteers from amongst them in order to conduct some



experiment, so that eventually there was hardly a lad in the class who had not, at one time or another, been thrown into a mesmeric trance by his professor.

Of all these young devotees of science there was none who equalled in enthusiasm Fritz von Hartmann. It had often seemed strange to his fellow-students that wild reckless Fritz, as dashing a young fellow as ever hailed from the Rhinelands, should devote the time and trouble which he did to reading up abstruse works and in assisting the Professor in his strange experiments. The fact was, however, that Fritz was a knowing and long-headed fellow. Months before he had lost his heart to young Elise, the blue-eyed, yellow-haired daughter of the lecturer. Although he had succeeded in learning from her lips that she was not indifferent to his suit, he had never dared to announce himself to her family as a formal suitor. Hence he would have found it a difficult matter to see his young lady had he not adopted the expedient of making himself useful to the Professor. By this means he frequently was asked to the old man's house, where he willingly submitted to be experimented upon in any way, as long as there was a chance of his receiving one bright glance from the eyes of Elise, or one touch of her little hand.

Young Fritz von Hartmann was a handsome lad



enough. There were broad acres, too, which would descend to him when his father died. To many he would have seemed an eligible suitor; but Madame frowned upon his presence in the house, and lectured the Professor at times on his allowing such a wolf to prowl around their lamb. To tell the truth, Fritz had an evil name in Keinplatz. Never was there a riot or a duel, or any other mischief afoot, but the young Rhinelander figured as a ringleader in it. No one used more free and violent language, no one drank more, no one played cards more habitually, no one was more idle, save in the one solitary subject. No wonder, then, that the good Frau Professorin gathered her Fräulein under her wing, and resented the attentions of such a *mauvais sujet*. As to the worthy lecturer, he was too much engrossed by his strange studies to form an opinion upon the subject, one way or the other.

For many years there was one question which had continually obtruded itself upon his thoughts. All his experiments and his theories turned upon a single point. A hundred times a day the Professor asked himself whether it was possible for the human spirit to exist apart from the body for a time and then to return to it once again. When the possibility first suggested itself to him his scientific mind had revolted from it. It clashed too violently



with preconceived ideas and the prejudices of his early training. Gradually, however, as he proceeded farther and farther along the pathway of original research, his mind shook off its old fetters and became ready to face any conclusion which could reconcile the facts. There were many things which made him believe that it was possible for mind to exist apart from matter. At last it occurred to him that by a daring and original experiment the question might be definitely decided.

"It is evident," he remarked in his celebrated article upon invisible entities, which appeared in the '*Keinplatz wochenliche Medicalschrift*' about this time, and which surprised the whole scientific world—"it is evident that under certain conditions the soul or mind does separate itself from the body. In the case of a mesmerized person, the body lies in a cataleptic condition, but the spirit has left it. Perhaps you reply that the soul is there, but in a dormant condition. I answer that this is not so, otherwise how can one account for the condition of clairvoyance, which has fallen into disrepute through the knavery of certain scoundrels, but which can easily be shown to be an undoubted fact? I have been able myself, with a sensitive subject, to obtain an accurate description of what was going on in another room or another house. How can such



knowledge be accounted for on any hypothesis save that the soul of the subject has left the body and is wandering through space? For a moment it is recalled by the voice of the operator, and says what it has seen, and then wings its way once more through the air. Since the spirit is by its very nature invisible, we cannot see these comings and goings, but we see their effect in the body of the subject, now rigid and inert, now struggling to narrate impressions which could never have come to it by natural means. There is only one way which I can see by which the fact can be demonstrated. Although we in the flesh are unable to see these spirits, yet our own spirits, could we separate them from the body, would be conscious of the presence of others. It is my intention, therefore, shortly to mesmerize one of my pupils. I shall then mesmerize myself in a manner which has become easy to me. After that, if my theory holds good, my spirit will have no difficulty in meeting and communing with the spirit of my pupil, both being separated from the body. I hope to be able to communicate the result of this interesting experiment in an early number of the '*Keinplatz wöchentliche Medicalschrift*.' "

When the good Professor finally fulfilled his promise, and published an account of what occurred,



the narrative was so extraordinary that it was received with general incredulity. The tone of some of the papers was so offensive in their comments upon the matter that the angry *savant* declared that he would never open his mouth again or refer to the subject in any way—a promise which he has faithfully kept. This narrative has been compiled, however, from the most authentic sources, and the events cited in it may be relied upon as substantially correct.

It happened, then, that shortly after the time when Professor von Baumgarten conceived the idea of the above-mentioned experiment, he was walking thoughtfully homewards after a long day in the laboratory when he met a crowd of roystering students who had just streamed out from a beer-house. At the head of them, half-intoxicated and very noisy, was young Fritz von Hartmann. The Professor would have passed them, but his pupil ran across and intercepted him.

“Heh ! my worthy master,” he said, taking the old man by the sleeve, and leading him down the road with him. “There is something that I have to say to you, and it is easier for me to say it now, when the good beer is humming in my head, than at another time.”

“What is it, then, Fritz ?” the physiologist asked, looking at him in mild surprise.



"I hear, mein herr, that you are about to do some wondrous experiment in which you hope to take a man's soul out of his body, and then to put it back again. Is it not so?"

"It is true, Fritz."

"And have you considered, my dear sir, that you may have some difficulty in finding some one on whom to try this? Potztausend! Suppose that the soul went out and would not come back. That would be a bad business. Who is to take the risk?"

"But, Fritz," the Professor cried, very much startled by this view of the matter, "I had relied upon your assistance in the matter. Surely you will not desert me. Consider the honour and glory."

"Consider the fiddlesticks!" the student cried angrily. "Am I to be paid always thus? Did I not stand two hours upon a glass insulator while you poured electricity into my body? Have you not stimulated my phrenic nerves, besides ruining my digestion with a galvanic current round my stomach? Four-and-thirty times you have mesmerized me, and what have I got from all this? Nothing. And now you wish to take my soul out, as you would take the works from a watch. It is more than flesh and blood can stand."

"Dear, dear!" the Professor cried in great distress.



"That is very true, Fritz. I never thought of it before. If you can but suggest how I can compensate you, you will find me ready and willing."

"Then listen," said Fritz solemnly. "If you will pledge your word that after this experiment I may have the hand of your daughter, then I am willing to assist you, but if not, I shall have nothing to do with it. Those are my only terms."

"And what would my daughter say to this?" the Professor exclaimed after a pause of astonishment.

"Elise would welcome it," the young man replied. "We have loved each other long."

"Then she shall be yours," the physiologist said with decision, "for you are a good-hearted young man, and one of the best neurotic subjects that I have ever known—that is, when you are not under the influence of alcohol. My experiment is to be performed upon the 4th of next month. You will attend at the physiological laboratory at twelve o'clock. It will be a great occasion, Fritz. Von Gruben is coming from Jena, and Hinterstein from Basle. The chief men of science of all South Germany will be there."

"I shall be punctual," the student said briefly; and so the two parted. The Professor plodded homeward, thinking of the great coming event, while



the young man staggered along after his noisy companions, with his mind full of the blue-eyed Elise, and of the bargain which he had concluded with her father.

The Professor did not exaggerate when he spoke of the widespread interest excited by his novel psycho-physiological experiment. Long before the hour had arrived the room was filled by a galaxy of talent. Besides the celebrities whom he had mentioned, there had come from London the great Professor Lurcher, who had just established his reputation by a remarkable treatise upon cerebral centres. Several great lights of the Spiritualistic body had also come a long distance to be present, as had a Swedenborgian minister, who considered that the proceedings might throw some light upon the doctrines of the Rosy Cross.

There was considerable applause from this eminent assembly, upon the appearance of Professor von Baumgarten and his subject upon the platform. The lecturer, in a few well-chosen words, explained what his views were, and how he proposed to test them. "I hold," he said, "that when a person is under the influence of mesmerism, his spirit is for the time released from his body, and I challenge any one to put forward any other hypothesis which will account for the fact of clairvoyance. I therefore



hope that upon mesmerizing my young friend here and then putting myself into a trance, our spirits may be able to commune together, though our bodies lie still and inert. After a time nature will resume her sway, our spirits will return into our respective bodies, and all will be as before. With your kind permission, we shall now proceed to attempt the experiment."

The applause was renewed at this speech, and the audience settled down in expectant silence. With a few rapid passes the Professor mesmerized the young man, who sank back in his chair, pale and rigid. He then took a bright globe of glass from his pocket, and, by concentrating his gaze upon it and making a strong mental effort, he succeeded in throwing himself into the same condition. It was a strange and impressive sight to see the old man and the young sitting together in the same cataleptic condition. Whither, then, had their souls fled? That was the question which presented itself to each and every one of the spectators.

Five minutes passed, and then ten, and then fifteen, and then fifteen more, while the Professor and his pupil sat stiff and stark upon the platform. During that time not a sound was heard from the assembled *savants*, but every eye was bent upon the two pale faces, in search of the first signs of returning



consciousness. Nearly an hour had elapsed before the patient watchers were rewarded. A faint flush came back to the cheeks of Professor von Baumgarten. The soul was coming back once more to its earthly tenement. Suddenly he stretched out his long thin arms, as one awaking from sleep, and rubbing his eyes, stood up from his chair and gazed about him as though he hardly realized where he was. "Tausend Teufel!" he exclaimed, rapping out a tremendous South German oath, to the great astonishment of his audience and to the disgust of the Swedenborgian. "Where the Henker am I then, and what in thunder has occurred?—Oh yes, I remember now. One of these nonsensical mesmeric experiments. There is no result this time, for I remember nothing at all since I became unconscious; so you have had all your long journeys for nothing, my learned friends, and a very good joke too;" at which the Regius Professor of Physiology burst into a roar of laughter and slapped his thigh in a highly indecorous fashion. The audience were so enraged at this unseemly behaviour on the part of their host, that there might have been a considerable disturbance had it not been for the judicious interference of young Fritz von Hartmann, who had now recovered from his lethargy. Stepping to the front of the platform, the young man apologized for the conduct of his companion. "I am



sorry to say," he said, "that he is a harum-scarum sort of fellow, although he appeared so grave at the commencement of this experiment. He is still suffering from mesmeric reaction and is hardly accountable for his words. As to the experiment itself, I do not consider it to be a failure. It is very possible that our spirits may have been communing in space during this hour; but, unfortunately, our gross bodily memory is distinct from our spirit, and we cannot recall what has occurred. My energies shall now be devoted to devising some means by which spirits may be able to recollect what occurs to them in their free state, and I trust that when I have worked this out, I may have the pleasure of meeting you all once again in this hall, and demonstrating to you the result." This address, coming from so young a student, caused considerable astonishment among the audience, and some were inclined to be offended, thinking that he assumed rather too much importance. The majority, however, looked upon him as a young man of great promise, and many comparisons were made as they left the hall between his dignified conduct and the levity of his professor, who during the above remarks was laughing heartily in a corner, by no means abashed at the failure of the experiment.

Now although all these learned men were filing



out of the lecture-room under the impression that they had seen nothing of note, as a matter of fact one of the most wonderful things in the whole history of the world had just occurred before their very eyes. Professor von Baumgarten had been so far correct in his theory that both his spirit and that of his pupil had been for a time absent from his body. But here a strange and unforeseen complication had occurred. In their return the spirit of Fritz von Hartmann had entered into the body of Alexis von Baumgarten, and that of Alexis von Baumgarten had taken up its abode in the frame of Fritz von Hartmann. Hence the slang and scurrility which issued from the lips of the serious Professor, and hence also the weighty words and grave statements which fell from the careless student. It was an unprecedented event, yet no one knew of it, least of all those whom it concerned.

The body of the Professor, feeling conscious suddenly of a great dryness about the back of the throat, sallied out into the street, still chuckling to himself over the result of the experiment, for the soul of Fritz within was reckless at the thought of the bride whom he had won so easily. His first impulse was to go up to the house and see her, but on second thoughts he came to the conclusion that it would be best to stay away until Madame Baumgarten should be informed by her husband of the



agreement which had been made. He therefore made his way down to the Grüner Mann, which was one of the favourite trysting-places of the wilder students, and ran, boisterously waving his cane in the air, into the little parlour, where sat Spiegler and Müller, and half a dozen other boon companions.

"Ha, ha! my boys," he shouted. "I knew I should find you here. Drink up, every one of you, and call for what you like, for I'm going to stand treat to-day."

Had the green man who is depicted upon the signpost of that well-known inn suddenly marched into the room and called for a bottle of wine, the students could not have been more amazed than they were by this unexpected entry of their revered professor. They were so astonished that for a minute or two they glared at him in utter bewilderment without being able to make any reply to his hearty invitation.

"Donner und Blitzen!" shouted the Professor angrily. "What the deuce is the matter with you, then? You sit there like a set of stuck pigs staring at me. What is it, then?"

"It is the unexpected honour," stammered Spiegel, who was in the chair.

"Honour—rubbish!" said the Professor testily. "Do you think that just because I happen to have been exhibiting mesmerism to a parcel of old fossils,



I am therefore too proud to associate with dear old friends like you? Come, out of that chair, Spiegel my boy, for I shall preside now. Beer, or wine, or shnapps, my lads—call for what you like and put it all down to me.”

Never was there such an afternoon in the Grüner Mann. The foaming flagons of lager and the green-necked bottles of Rhenish circulated merrily. By degrees the students lost their shyness in the presence of their professor. As for him, he shouted, he sang, he roared, he balanced a long tobacco-pipe upon his nose, and offered to run a hundred yards against any member of the company. The Kellner and the barmaid whispered to each other outside the door their astonishment at such proceedings on the part of a regius professor of the ancient university of Keinplatz. They had still more to whisper about afterwards, for the learned man cracked the Kellner's crown and kissed the barmaid behind the kitchen door.

“Gentlemen,” said the Professor, standing up, albeit somewhat tottering, at the end of the table, and balancing his high old-fashioned wineglass in his bony hand, “I must now explain to you what is the cause of this festivity.”

“Hear! hear!” roared the students, hammering their beer-glasses against the table—“a speech, a speech!—silence for a speech!”



"The fact is, my friends," said the Professor, beaming through his spectacles, "I hope very soon to be married."

"Married!" cried a student, bolder than the others. "Is Madame dead, then?"

"Madame who?"

"Why, Madame von Baumgarten, of course."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the Professor; "I can see, then, that you know all about my former difficulties. No, she is not dead, but I have reason to believe that she will not oppose my marriage."

"That is very accommodating of her," remarked one of the company.

"In fact," said the Professor, "I hope that she will now be induced to aid me in getting a wife. She and I never took to each other very much; but now I hope all that may be ended, and when I marry she will come and stay with me."

"What a happy family!" exclaimed some wag.

"Yes, indeed, and I hope you will come to my wedding, all of you. I won't mention names, but here is to my little bride!" and the Professor waved his glass in the air.

"Here's to his little bride!" roared the roysterers with shouts of laughter. "Here's her health. Sie soll leben—Hoch!"—and so the fun waxed still more fast and furious, while each young fellow fol-



lowed the Professor's example, and drank a toast to the girl of his heart.

While all this festivity had been going on at the Grüner Mann, a very different scene had been enacted elsewhere. Young Fritz von Hartmann, with a solemn face and a reserved manner, had, after the experiment, consulted and adjusted some mathematical instruments; after which, with a few peremptory words to the janitors, he had walked out into the street and wended his way slowly in the direction of the house of the Professor. As he walked he saw Von Althaus, the professor of anatomy, in front of him, and quickening his pace he overtook him.

"I say, Von Althaus," he exclaimed, tapping him on the sleeve, "you were asking me for some information the other day concerning the middle coat of the cerebral arteries. Now I find——"

"Donnerwetter!" shouted Von Althaus, who was a peppery old fellow. "What the deuce do you mean by your impertinence! I'll have you up before the Academical Senate for this, sir;" with which threat he turned on his heel, and hurried away.

Von Hartmann was much surprised at this reception. "It's on account of this failure of my experiment," he said to himself, and continued moodily on his way.



Fresh surprises were in store for him, however. He was hurrying along when he was overtaken by two students. These youths, instead of raising their caps or showing any other sign of respect, gave a wild whoop of delight the instant that they saw him, and rushing at him, seized him by each arm and commenced dragging him along with them.

"Gott in himmel!" roared Von Hartmann. "What is the meaning of this unparalleled insult? Where are you taking me?"

"To crack a bottle of wine with us," said the two students. "Come along! That is an invitation which you have never refused."

"I never heard of such insolence in my life!" cried Von Hartmann. "Let go my arms! I shall certainly have you rusticated for this. Let me go, I say!" and he kicked furiously at his captors.

"Oh, if you choose to turn ill-tempered, you may go where you like," the students said, releasing him. "We can do very well without you."

"I know you. I'll pay you out," said Von Hartmann furiously, and continued in the direction which he imagined to be his own home, much incensed at the two episodes which had occurred to him on the way.

Now Madame von Baumgarten, who was looking out of the window and wondering why her husband



was late for dinner, was considerably astonished to see the young student come stalking down the road. As already remarked, she had a great antipathy to him, and if ever he ventured into the house it was on sufferance, and under the protection of the Professor. Still more astonished was she therefore when she beheld him undo the wicket gate and stride up the garden path with the air of one who is master of the situation. She could hardly believe her eyes, and hastened to the door with all her maternal instincts up in arms. From the upper windows the fair Elise had also observed this daring move upon the part of her lover, and her heart beat quick with mingled pride and consternation.

"Good day, sir," Madame Baumgarten remarked to the intruder as she stood in gloomy majesty in the open doorway.

"A very fine day indeed, Martha," returned the other. "Now, don't stand there like a statue of Juno, but bustle about and get the dinner ready, for I am well-nigh starved."

"Martha! Dinner!" ejaculated the lady, falling back in astonishment.

"Yes, dinner, Martha, dinner!" howled Von Hartmann, who was becoming irritable. "Is there anything wonderful in that request when a man has been out all day? I'll wait in the dining-room.



Anything will do. Schinken, and sausage, and prunes—any little thing that happens to be about. There you are, standing staring again. Woman, will you or will you not stir your legs?”

This last address, delivered with a perfect shriek of rage, had the effect of sending good Madame Baumgarten flying along the passage and through the kitchen, where she locked herself up in the scullery and went into violent hysterics. In the mean time Von Hartmann strode into the room and threw himself down upon the sofa in the worst of tempers.

“Elise!” he shouted. “Confound the girl! Elise!”

Thus roughly summoned, the young lady came timidly down-stairs and into the presence of her lover. “Dearest!” she cried, throwing her arms round him. “I know this is all done for my sake! It is a *ruse* in order to see me.”

Von Hartmann’s indignation at this fresh attack upon him was so great that he became speechless for a minute from rage, and could only glare and shake his fists, while he struggled in her embrace. When he at last regained his utterance, he indulged in such a bellow of passion that the young lady dropped back, petrified with fear, into an armchair.

“Never have I passed such a day in my life,” Von Hartmann cried, stamping upon the floor. “My



experiment has failed. Von Althaus has insulted me. Two students have dragged me along the public road. My wife nearly faints when I ask her for dinner, and my daughter flies at me and hugs me like a grizzly bear."

"You are ill, dear," the young lady cried. "Your mind is wandering. You have not even kissed me once."

"No, and I don't intend to either," Von Hartmann said with decision. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Why don't you go and fetch my slippers, and help your mother to dish the dinner?"

"And is it for this," Elise cried, burying her face in her handkerchief—"is it for this that I have loved you passionately for upwards of ten months? Is it for this that I have braved my mother's wrath? Oh, you have broken my heart, I am sure you have!" and she sobbed hysterically.

"I can't stand much more of this," roared Von Hartmann furiously. "What the deuce does the girl mean? What did I do ten months ago which inspired you with such a particular affection for me? If you are really so very fond, you would do better to run away down and find the schinken and some bread, instead of talking all this nonsense."

"Oh, my darling!" cried the unhappy maiden, throwing herself into the arms of what she imagined



to be her lover, "you do but joke in order to frighten your little Elise."

Now it chanced that at the moment of this unexpected embrace, Von Hartmann was still leaning back against the end of the sofa, which, like much German furniture, was in a somewhat rickety condition. It also chanced that beneath this end of the sofa there stood a tank full of water in which the physiologist was conducting certain experiments upon the ova of fish, and which he kept in his drawing-room in order to insure an equable temperature. The additional weight of the maiden, combined with the impetus with which she hurled herself upon him, caused the precarious piece of furniture to give way, and the body of the unfortunate student was hurled backwards into the tank, in which his head and shoulders were firmly wedged while his lower extremities flapped helplessly about in the air. This was the last straw. Extricating himself with some difficulty from his unpleasant position, Von Hartmann gave an inarticulate yell of fury, and dashing out of the room, in spite of the entreaties of Elise, he seized his hat and rushed off into the town, all dripping and dishevelled, with the intention of seeking in some inn the food and comfort which he could not find at home.

As the spirit of Von Baumgarten encased in the



body of Von Hartmann strode down the winding pathway which led down to the little town, brooding angrily over his many wrongs, he became aware that an elderly man was approaching him who appeared to be in an advanced state of intoxication. Von Hartmann waited by the side of the road and watched this individual, who came stumbling along, reeling from one side of the road to the other, and singing a student song in a very husky and drunken voice. At first his interest was merely excited by the fact of seeing a man of so venerable an appearance in such a disgraceful condition, but as he approached nearer, he became convinced that he knew the other well, though he could not recall when or where he had met him. This impression became so strong with him, that when the stranger came abreast of him he stepped in front of him and took a good look at his features.

"Well, sonny," said the drunken man, surveying Von Hartmann and swaying about in front of him, "where the Henker have I seen you before? I know you as well as I know myself. Who the deuce are you?"

"I am Professor von Baumgarten," said the student. "May I ask who you are? I am strangely familiar with your features."

"You should never tell lies, young man," said the



other. "You're certainly not the Professor, for he is an ugly snuffy old chap, and you are a big broad-shouldered young fellow. As ~~to~~ myself, I am Fritz von Hartmann at your service."

"That you certainly are not," exclaimed the body of Von Hartmann. "You might very well be his father. But hullo, sir, are you aware that you are wearing my studs and my watch-chain?"

"Donnerwetter!" hiccoughed the other. "If those are not the trousers for which my tailor is about to sue me, may I never taste beer again."

Now as Von Hartmann, overwhelmed by the many strange things which had occurred to him that day, passed his hand over his forehead and cast his eyes downwards, he chanced to catch the reflection of his own face in a pool which the rain had left upon the road. To his utter astonishment he perceived that his face was that of a youth, that his dress was that of a fashionable young student, and that in every way he was the antithesis of the grave and scholarly figure in which his mind was wont to dwell. In an instant his active brain ran over the series of events which had occurred, and sprang to the conclusion. He fairly reeled under the blow.

"Himmel!" he cried, "I see it all. Our souls are in the wrong bodies. I am you and you are I. My theory is proved—but at what an expense! Is the



most scholarly mind in Europe to go about with this frivolous exterior? Oh, the labours of a lifetime are ruined!" and he smote his breast in his despair.

"I say," remarked the real Von Hartmann from the body of the Professor, "I quite see the force of your remarks, but don't go knocking my body about like that. You received it in excellent condition, but I perceive that you have wet it and bruised it, and spilled snuff over my ruffled shirt-front."

"It matters little," the other said moodily. "Such as we are so must we stay. My theory is triumphantly proved, but the cost is terrible."

"If I thought so," said the spirit of the student, "it would be hard indeed. What could I do with these stiff old limbs, and how could I woo Elise and persuade her that I was not her father? No, thank heaven, in spite of the beer which has upset me more than ever it could upset my real self, I can see a way out of it."

"How?" gasped the Professor.

"Why, by repeating the experiment. Liberate our souls once more, and the chances are that they will find their way back into their respective bodies."

No drowning man could clutch more eagerly at a straw than did Von Baumgarten's spirit at this suggestion. In feverish haste he dragged his own frame to the side of the road and threw it into a



mesmeric trance ; he then extracted the crystal ball from the pocket, and managed to bring himself into the same condition.

Some students and peasants who chanced to pass during the next hour were much astonished to see the worthy Professor of Physiology and his favourite student both sitting upon a very muddy bank, and both completely insensible. Before the hour was up quite a crowd had assembled, and they were discussing the advisability of sending for an ambulance to convey the pair to hospital, when the learned *savant* opened his eyes and gazed vacantly around him. For an instant he seemed to forget how he had come there, but next moment he astonished his audience by waving his skinny arms above his head and crying out in a voice of rapture, "Gott sei gedanket ! I am myself again. I feel I am !" nor was the amazement lessened when the student springing to his feet burst into the same cry, and the two performed a sort of "pas de joie" in the middle of the road.

For some time after that people had some suspicion of the sanity of both the actors in this strange episode. When the Professor published his experiences in the 'Medicalschrift' as he had promised, he was met by an intimation, even from his colleagues, that he would do well to have his mind cared for, and that another such publication would certainly



consign him to a madhouse. The student also found by experience that it was wisest to be silent about the matter.

When the worthy lecturer returned home that night he did not receive the cordial welcome which he might have looked for after his strange adventures. On the contrary, he was roundly upbraided by both his female relatives for smelling of drink and tobacco, and also for being absent while a young scapegrace invaded the house and insulted its occupants. It was long before the domestic atmosphere of the lecturer's house resumed its normal quiet, and longer still before the genial face of Von Hartmann was seen beneath its roof. Perseverance, however, conquers every obstacle, and the student eventually succeeded in pacifying the enraged ladies and in establishing himself upon the old footing. He has now no longer any cause to fear the enmity of Madame, for he is Hauptmann von Hartmann of the Emperor's own Uhlans, and his loving wife Elise has already presented him with two little Uhlans as a visible sign and token of her affection.

△

## GHOSTS.

CREATURES of mist, half credited ;  
Our faint form flings  
No shadow in moonlight on the bed  
We visit ; noiseless is our tread,  
Who come from deserts of the dead,  
Where no bird sings.

For ever, in dark and cold forlorn,  
We wander there ;  
Pale spectres, wondrous pale and worn,  
As privet flowers at even shorn  
Are pale when Phosphor fails with morn,  
We who once were.

Who now nor see the sunny day,  
Nor waving wheat  
Hear whisper in its autumn play ;  
The sweet world's face is never gay  
For us, who see no flowers of May ;  
But night is sweet.



Night brings us back to earth again,  
    Again we fill  
Our old familiar homes, a train  
Of dead men out of mind, who fain  
To be remembered, long, in vain,  
    To linger still.

In vain. Dawn's dated herald shows  
    Dawn comes apace.  
On the orient heaven ere Morning throws  
Broadcast her buds of white and rose,  
Each sad unwilling phantom goes  
    To its own place.

Ah, why are these, when we appear,  
    Our children, frayed ?  
Could they once feel how very dear  
We find their faces, none would fear  
Us, so far distant, yet so near,  
    Dim folk of shade.

Do these not know their children's toys,  
    Long years ago,  
Were ours ; their lovers' woes and joys,  
Their prayers, their faith, their fame, their noise,  
Know they not this, these girls and boys,  
    Nor care to know ?

As sights, which memory endears,  
    Seen once more, please ;  
As sounds, unheard for many years,  
Heard once more waken joys and tears,—  
So are we moved by hopes and fears  
    And cares of these.

Oft at their births we intervene ;  
    The stray ears strown  
In their loves' harvest-home we glean  
And garner ; in their deaths we lean  
Over them, kindred shadows seen  
    By them alone.

Would we might help them, though abhorred,  
    From harm and wrong !  
From plague and famine, fire and sword,  
In weal and woe, at bed and board,  
Would our weak hands might work to ward  
    Their whole life long !

Would we might say the things we know,  
    A little say  
Of all the gods conceal ! But, lo,  
Our very dumb lips bid men go  
Eat bread, and let the wine's blood flow  
    While it is day.



Bid them, while yet they see the light,  
    Ere the black pall  
Cover them, let their robes be white,  
Perfumed their heads in death's despite :  
We know what wisdom is in night,  
    What end for all.

We watch the moon's far choral band  
    Fade in the blue ;  
We watch the sinking grains of sand,  
And yearn for voices to command,  
"Do with your might what deed your hand  
    May find to do."

We watch the unheeded hours, which yet  
    Return no more ;  
We watch them wane with long regret.  
Ye fools ! what meed have faces met  
With fasting gaunt, with weeping wet,  
    Sealed up in store ?

Warm tender hands with last touch close  
    The dead's dull eyes ;  
For ever from you to us he goes,  
To our waste land where no wind blows.  
Whither beyond ? What wise man knows,  
    However wise ?

Tossed for a while in life's mad foam,  
A bubble at best,  
His body lies long wrapped in loam ;  
With us his weary ghost must roam  
Always : men call it going home  
To perfect rest.

Home ! rest ! words laughed by us to scorn.  
Is, then, rest there  
Indeed ? But we away are torn :  
We see the glow-worm's glimmer born,  
We smell the mild sweet breath of morn,  
And mix with air.



## A WEIRD STORY OF BRUGES.

MANY years ago, when in Bruges, that "quaint old town of art and song," as Longfellow styles it—a town all unchanged since the ancient days of Flanders—I became cognizant of the following events, by happening to be present at the examination of the chief actor in them, before one of the two burgomasters who govern the city.

With a Belgian friend, I had been lounging in a window of the club-house that overlooks the spacious square known as the Grande Place (above which towers the wonderful belfry, from whence one may look down on the frontiers of Holland as on a map, and from whence, it is said, the mouth of the Thames may be seen on a clear day), when a police escort, with swords drawn, conducted a prisoner past, towards the Palais de Justice. He was a young man of the better class, apparently, very pale, very sad, and depressed in aspect, very handsome in face,

graceful in bearing, and most unlike a criminal. His hands, however, were manacled, and a crowd of workmen and children clattered noisily around him in their wooden sabots.

As the rumour spread that a terrible assassination had just been committed, we followed the escort to the magnificent old hall in that edifice, which was whilom the Palais du Franc de Bruges, and which contains a chimney-piece occupying one entire side of it, with gigantic statues carved in wood, and marble bas-reliefs representing chastely the story of Susannah and the Elders, as the reader may find in his 'John Murray.'

From that which transpired at the examination of the prisoner, and what I read in a few subsequent numbers of the little local paper named 'La Patrie,' I gleaned the substance of the following story, which, in some of its features, reminds one of the case of Oriental metempsychosis mentioned in the 'Spectator'—the passing of the soul from body to body, including the influences of mesmeric, crystalline, and magnetic forces, though I do not pretend to know anything of the learned and mysterious jargon concerning those matters; but much of which I heard that day referred to in the Palais de Justice.

A mile or so on the level highway beyond the beautiful round towers of the loopholed and em-



battled Porte St. Croix, one of the still remaining barriers of the old fortifications, there stands at a little distance from the road a quaint old Flemish dwelling-house, built of red brick, and almost hidden among chestnut and apple trees. If we are to believe the 'Chronyke Van Vlanderen,' it was once a shooting-box of Charles the Bold, and near it Mary of Burgundy received the fall from her horse which proved so fatal. Be all this as it may, it is a house with many pointed gables, strange outshots and beams of quaintly-carved oak; and therein, with his nephew, Hendrik, and an old housekeeper, resided Dr. Van Gansendonck, called Doctor, not from his profession, but for his learning, as he enjoyed the reputation of understanding all languages, living and dead, and being master of every science, human and divine; and was regarded by the simple and religious Brugois as altogether a miracle of a man in some respects.

Some there were who deemed him a dangerous dupe to his own powers, and these were the clergy especially, who, with something of repugnance, drew their black cloaks closer about them when "the doctor" passed them on the highway or in the narrow unpaved streets, and it was notorious that he never crossed the threshold of a church, or was known to lift his hat either to them or to the



numerous Madonnas that decorate every street corner, and many a doorway too, in Bruges.

The Herr Doctor, now past his sixtieth year, had, in some respects, decidedly a bad reputation, and a hundred and fifty years ago or so, might have ended his studies amid a blaze of tar-barrels in the Grande Place as a wizard, but in this our age of steam and telegraphy he was viewed as simply a learned eccentric, and as a dabbler in mesmerism, clairvoyance, the odic light, and second sight; but these occult mysteries, which the Church condemns, he would seem to have carried to a length that seems strangely out of place in these days of hard facts and practical common-sense.

A forehead high and bald, a head tonsured round by a fringe of silvery hair, eyes keen and quick as those of a rattlesnake—eyes that seemed to glare through his gold-rimmed glasses, made the face of Herr Van Gansendonck so remarkable, that those who saw it never failed to be impressed by its strange expression of intellectual power, tinged with somewhat of insanity; but his visitors were few. His time was chiefly spent in his library; and as he was rich, being proprietor of more than one of those gigantic mills, the sails of which overshadow the grassy ramparts, he could afford to please himself by living as he chose, and seclusion was his choice. He



seemed to have but one favourite only—Hendrik—a brother's orphan son, whom he had adopted, educated, and who was to be his heir.

Hendrik was now in his twentieth year, decidedly handsome, but with dreamy blue eyes that had an expression in them one could not easily forget; yet the lad's temperament was poetic and enthusiastic, and now he had but recently returned to Bruges, after undergoing a course of study, and attending those lectures which are given on science, literature, and art at the library of the Museum in Brussels.

The grim old student hailed the return of the younger one with a pleasure that he did not conceal, and there was at least *one* more in Bruges that did so with joy.

This was Lenora, the daughter of Madame Van Eyck, a widow lady, residing in one of those quaint old houses at the Quai Espagnol. To her he had been betrothed, and the monetary plans of his uncle alone were awaited for their marriage, young though Hendrik was.

Bruges, according to an old monkish rhyme, has ever been celebrated for its pretty girls, but Lenora Van Eyck, a bright blonde of eighteen, was more than pretty—she was charming, with that wonderful bloom of complexion which is so truly Belgian; light, laughing, hazel eyes that were full of merriment,



and all her ways and modes of expression piquant and attractive.

She had been one of the six young ladies who, clothed and veiled in white, were selected on the last Corpus Christi day to bear the gilt Madonna through the streets before the bishop. Lenora had been with her family at Blankenberg—the little Brighton of the Brugois—for several weeks after the return of Hendrik to the house of his uncle; and when again they met at their favourite trysting-place, the long walk of stately poplars by the canal near the Porte St. Croix, she soon became conscious of a strange and painful change in the bearing, the manner, and the eyes of her lover. Languor seemed to pervade every action; his face had become pale, his eyes more dreamy than ever, and he was unusually taciturn and abstracted.

Why was this? Lenora asked of herself, while she watched him with that keenness of eye and anxiety of heart that are born of love and tenderness, for there was a singular mystery now about the once happy Hendrik that filled her with grave perplexity. Had his love for her changed? His eyes, though sad, were loving in expression as ever, when they met hers—yet even his smile was sad—so very sad!

Again and again, in her most winning way, she



would implore Hendrik to reveal to her any secret that weighed upon his mind, but in vain. Why was it, she asked, that he, whom she had left so lively in bearing and happy in spirit, had now become so moody? and why was it that there were times when he seemed to feel himself compelled, as it were, to leave her suddenly and in haste, without a word of explanation, apology, or excuse? She pleaded without avail; Hendrik could but avert his pallid face, or cover his eyes with his hand, as if to shut out some painful vision, to crush some worrying thought.

He dared not tell her—lest she should deem him mad, and so shrink from him—that his uncle, the Herr Van Gansendonck, had, mesmerically, acquired a mysterious and terrible influence over him, and that by the mere power of will he could summon him to his presence at all times, wherever he might be, or with whomsoever he was engaged—even with herself; and that he, Hendrik, found himself totally powerless and incapable of effecting his emancipation from the bodily and mental thralldom under which he writhed!

He dared not tell her all this, or, further, that Herr Van Gansendonck had the power to set him asleep on a chair in his library, and then to cause his spirit (for this was alleged in the Palais de Justice) to disengage itself from the body, and go on



distant missions through the air for thousands of miles in the course of a few minutes, or that when thus put to sleep, the Herr, by exciting his organ of *ideality*, could obtain such information as he wished on strange and abstruse subjects.

That he had become a helpless and nerve-shattered mesmeric medium, he thought at times he might confide to her; but even in this his courage failed him, for other and more terrifying convictions were creeping upon him; thus he shrank from telling the girl who loved him so dearly, that when his spiritual essence was despatched to distant lands, that Herr, by the same power, permitted *other* spirits to enter his body and use its members for purposes of their own. The horror of this idea, it was alleged, made the youth's life insupportable, for on awaking from these strange and involuntary trances, he would at times find on his person cuts and bruises he was all unconscious of receiving; sometimes his purse would be gone, or in its place might be found strange money and letters to and from individuals of whose existence he knew nothing.

All this was done by one whose power he could neither repel nor defy; and now he had the natural dread that if his body was made to obey the behests of these spiritual intruders, he might be led into some horrible predicament—the committal of a



dreadful crime. Another might even come in his place and meet Lenora! . . . .

One evening as they sat on the grassy rampart that overlooked the great canal, the girl strove to rouse or soothe him by singing with great sweetness one of Jan Van Beer's Flemish songs; but the music of her voice and the poetry of the author of 'Zeik Jongeling' fell on Hendrik's ear in vain. When she paused,

"I dreamt of you last night, darling Lenora," said the young man, looking at her with inexpressible tenderness; "but such dreams are so tantalizing, even more so than the dreams one has by day."

"All your life seems one hazy dream now, Hendrik," said Lenora somewhat petulantly.

"Forgive me, dearest, you know not what you talk of. My mind, I grant you, is a chaos, full of strange terrors, perplexity, and confusion; and times there are when I fear for my reason," he added wildly, passing a hand over his forehead, and looking aside.

"Dear Hendrik, do not speak thus, I implore you."

"I must—in whom can I confide, if not in you? And yet I dare not—I dare not!"

After a pause he spoke again, but with his eyes fixed, not on her, but on the still, deep water of the shining canal.



"This much I will tell you, Lenora. Yesterday, my uncle sent me on some business of his to the house of an advocate, Père Baas, near the Béguinage, a house in which I had never been before, and I was shown into a room to wait. On looking round, to my astonishment, every article in it—and the room itself—the ceiling, the stove, the windows, and the paintings—especially one by Hans Hemling—were all familiar to me, and I seemed to *recognize* every object there. 'I was never here before,' thought I; 'and yet I must have been—but when? If so, there is a little window behind this picture, which opens to the garden of the Béguinage.' I turned the picture, and lo! there was the little window in question; I saw through it the garden with all its cherry trees and two or three béguines flitting about. Oh, Leonora, there is indeed some power beyond matter, proving that the soul is independent of the body!"

"It must have been a dream."

"It was *no* dream," replied Hendrik gloomily.

"But how do you account for the strange fancy?"

"My disembodied spirit must have been there, sent on some accursed errand by my uncle!"

"But you would die, Hendrik."

"Not if another tenant were at hand," replied Hendrik, gnashing his teeth.



Then the girl wept to hear him, as she naturally deemed it, raving thus.

"Such things cannot be," said she, sobbing.

"My uncle says they may; and the theory is as old as the days of Pythagoras."

"I know nothing of Herr Pythagoras; but this I know, that the Herr Van Gansendonck is a strange and bad man. Pardon me, dear Hendrik; but he never enters a church door, nor has he been to mass or confession for years. Leave him, and Bruges too, rather than become the victim of such dreadful delusions."

"To do either is to leave and to lose you! I am his heir; and we have but to wait his pleasure—or, it may be, his death, to be so happy," replied Hendrik sadly; and then they relapsed into silence. With Lenora it was silence induced by sorrow and alarm, while her lover seemed to let his thoughts slip away into dreamland.

The sultry summer evening breeze rustled the leaves near them; the honey-bees buzzed and hummed among the wild flowers and buttercups that grew on the old rampart; and far away could be heard the ceaseless chirping of the crickets.

Lenora's head rested on Hendrik's shoulder, and he was lost in thought, though mechanically toying with her hair, which shone like ripples of gold in the light of the setting sun.



He was aware that Lenora had begun to speak to him again; her voice seemed to mingle with the drowsy hum of the bees and the evening chimes or carillons in the distant spires; but he heard her as if he heard her not; till suddenly a thrill seemed to pass over him, as a secret and intuitive sense or knowledge that his terrible relation required his immediate presence, made him start from the grassy bank, snatch a hasty kiss, and hurry away by the arch of the Porte St. Croix, leaving Lenora mortified, sorrowful, and utterly bewildered by the abruptness of his departure.

“Oh, how changed he is!” thought she, as she proceeded slowly in the other direction towards her home on the Quai Espagnol.

On two or three occasions the unhappy Hendrik had what he conceived to be undoubted proof of his body having been, in the intervals of mesmeric trances, tenanted by another spirit than his own; and this strange and wild conviction caused such intense horror and loathing of his uncle, that the expressions to which he gave utterance to more than one of his friends—more than all to Lenora—were recalled, most fatally for himself, at a future time.

One day, in the Rue des Augustines, he was accosted by Brother Eusebius, a Capuchin.

“Friend Hendrik,” said he, severely and gravely,



"was it becoming in you to be roystering as you were yesterday at the low estaminet in the market-place, and with such companions—fellows in blouses and sabots?"

"Impossible, Brother Eusebius; I was not there," faltered Hendrik, as the usual fear crept over him.

"I, myself, saw you. And, moreover, you looked at me."

"When—at what hour?"

"Six in the evening."

"Six!"

Hendrik felt himself grow pale. He remembered that at that identical time he was under the hands of his uncle. He groaned in sore and dire perplexity, and his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, while the Capuchin continued to address him in tones of rebuke and earnest remonstrance.

"Have I a double-ganger, or am I becoming crazed?" urged Hendrik. "Believe me, Brother Eusebius, I was not there!" he added piteously and earnestly.

"At the hour of six!" persisted the unbelieving Capuchin,

"I swear to you that at the hour of six I was, and had been for some time, in one of those unaccountable trances in which my uncle has the power to cast me—one of those hours of bodily torpor that

have come upon me," he added, while the perspiration poured in bead-drops from his pallid brow. "I awoke about eight. I heard the chimes ringing in the church of St. Giles, and near me sat my uncle, pen in hand, as if in the act of questioning me and committing to paper that which I had been revealing in my magnetic slumber. Oh! am I the victim of necromancy?"

"Scarcely in this age of the world," replied the Capuchin, but now with more of pity than rebuke in his manner.

"I swear to you by the Holy Blood that I speak the truth!" continued Hendrik, referring to the famous *relique* of the Brugois in the little chapel near the 'Hôtel de Ville.' "I last remember hearing the voice of my uncle as I sank into sleep; my arms fell powerless by my side; my eyes closed; waves of magnetic fluid or air seemed to flow over me; and my spirit passed away, at his behests, to other lands."

"What madness—what raving is this, Hendrik?" said the sandalled friar, with sadness and severity. "Do you mean to tell me that your uncle is another Cagliostro—a veritable Balsamo?"

"I fear it—I fear it," said Hendrik, with clasped hands.

"Learn first to fear the potations of the estaminet,"



replied the Capuchin, as he turned coldly and bluntly away, believing that the young man was intoxicated.

On another occasion Hendrik failed to keep an appointment with Lenora Van Eyck, who waited for him anxiously till long past the time named, and then proceeded pensively homeward. As she approached the steep and antique bridge that leads from the Rue des Augustines to the Quai Espagnol she saw Hendrik cross it, and look at her calmly and deliberately the while, but without a glance or smile of recognition. Her heart, which at first had beat happily, now became perplexed as he turned abruptly up the opposite bank of the canal, and dropped into a little skiff, which he proceeded to unmoor, and, in doing so, cut his right hand severely.

"Hendrik! Hendrik!" she called aloud; but he heard her not, and, shipping a pair of sculls, pulled swiftly out of sight.

When next they met, and she upbraided him with this strange conduct, the same emotion of fear that had come over him when confronted by the Capuchin again filled his heart, and he called heaven to witness that it was not he whom she had seen.

"But here, Hendrik, love, is the wound on your hand," urged the astonished girl.

"I know not how I received it," he moaned, "though aware that a wound is there."



"This passes all comprehension!" said Lenora mournfully. "Oh! Hendrik, I thought a love like ours would never die; yet doubt and terror are destroying it now."

Something like a sob came into Hendrik's throat, and through his clenched teeth he muttered hoarsely and fiercely—

"This kind of life—a double life, it would seem—cannot last for ever. Nothing does last for ever, and the end will come anon." And as he spoke he fixed his moist and now hollow eyes as if on some distant horizon which he alone could see.

"Hendrik!—dearest Hendrik!" urged the girl soothingly, as she caressed his face between her soft and pretty hands, for her heart was full of alarm as well as love; it was a conviction so dreadful, the fear that he was perhaps becoming insane.

"Can over-study at Brussels have made the poor boy ill?" thought Lenora, in the solitude of her chamber that night. "Oh! must I give him up after all—after all? Dare I go through life as the wife of one so strange, so wayward, and so moody? No; better be a *béguine* like Aunt Truey. I am so happy at home. Why do girls marry? and for what do I want to marry?" And as she pondered thus, she sat looking at her white hands, and changing Hendrik's betrothal ring—an opal set with diamonds



—from one finger to another, till it slipped from her and rolled away on the varnished floor, from whence she snatched it up with a little cry of alarm, for the event seemed ominous of evil. “Oh, I must indeed consult Brother Eusebius about this matter,” was her concluding thought, more especially as the Capuchin had told her that “opals were unlucky.”

And when he dropped in for his post-prandial cup of coffee with her mother that evening, Lenora did take him into her confidence; but the friar only imbibed pinch after pinch of snuff from the huge wooden box which he carried in the sleeve pocket of his brown frock; hinted of what he had seen at the estaminet, and shook his shaven head, adding that “Hendrik Van Gansendonck came of a bad stock, and should be avoided.” So the Capuchin was consulted no more on the subject.

Hendrik now broke many appointments made with Lenora. He seemed to be no longer the master of his own actions, and he was so frequently reproached by her for his inattention and unkindness, that he feared to make a promise to her at all, and two entire days passed without their meeting.

Could he tell her that which he now confidently believed to be the case; that Herr Van Gansendonck had cast him into a mesmeric trance, leaving him in that condition, and intending to come back in an



hour or so; but, having been summoned away on business, had left him, to all appearance, spell-bound and helpless, to the terror of the old housekeeper at the chateau?

On the third day he met her coming from vespers in the church of the Béguinage, where she had been to visit her Aunt Truey.

Lenora was very pale; her eyes were full of tears, and, as Hendrik could perceive, they were sparkling with resentment. She was in the very summer of her beauty—that age when all girls seem pretty. Hendrik gazed upon her caressingly, and would have kissed her, but the walk was a public one, and the *blanchisseurs* were busy amid the Minnewater. Lenora was so prettily dressed, too; and most suitably did her silver-grey costume, trimmed with rose-coloured ribbon, become her blonde beauty, her purity of complexion, and fair shining tresses. Fresh, young, and graceful, there was a delicacy and softness in all her air and person, yet anger was apparent in her eyes; and those of Lenora were what a writer has described, as “wonderful golden eyes—eyes which painters dare not imitate, because the colour is so subtle, and the light in them so living—eyes that are called hazel, but are not hazel.”

“I now know the reason of your avoiding me in the Rue des Augustines, and also where you



were going on that evening in the skiff," said she.

"Lenora, have I not already said——"

"Hendrik," interrupted the girl, with severity, "I have for some time feared that you were crazed; now I find that you were wicked, and that Brother Eusebius was right after all."

"Wicked—my darling!"

"Do not speak to me thus; I have good reason to be most indignant with you," she continued, stamping her little foot on the ground.

"For what, dearest?" asked Hendrik, whose heart was sinking with vague apprehension as usual.

"Cease to twitch your moustache, and answer me this: was it right or proper of you to be drinking with soldiers at the Rampart de Caserne last evening?—and worse still, to be toying with and caressing little Mademoiselle Dentelle, the lace-maker, who lives there—toying with her actually in the open street, while mamma and I passed you?" added Lenora, whose eyes were flashing through their tears, though her cheek was pale, as Hendrik's now became.

He was voiceless, and could make neither response nor reply, for he knew that at the time to which she referred he had been, so he simply phrased it, "put to sleep in his kinsman's study," and that on awaking he had found himself *not* there, but lying on the



grassy bank near the Rampart de Caserne, and that, instead of his hat, he found on his head the kepi of a soldier of the 2nd Regiment, then quartered in Bruges, and a pipe, of which he knew nothing, dangling from a button of his coat! The stars were shining, and the dew was on the grass, but how long he had been there, or how he came to be there, were alike mysteries to him.

He felt bitterly the utter hopelessness of urging more to Lenora; yet he attempted to falter out some explanation.

"This is juggling, Hendrik," replied the girl passionately; "another face—another love has come between us, otherwise you would not dare to treat me thus!"

"Your suspicion is false, dearest Lenora," said he. "Oh, pardon me, sweet one! but I feel as if I were in a dream—as if I were some one else, and not myself!"

"Again, dreams!" said Lenora scornfully, as she drew his betrothal ring from her finger, dashed it at his feet, and left him. Night after night had Lenora lain awake, brooding over the change that had come upon Hendrik, weeping the while, with wide-open eyes in the darkness, and now she had come to the firm resolution to dismiss him for ever; but when she left him, silent, stunned, and confounded by the



Minnewater, her heart yearned for him again, and she repented her severity, lest his mind might be, as she too justly feared, affected.

And now he, while gazing wistfully after her retiring figure, thought with loathing and horror of the keen visage, the hawk-like nose, the cold, yet clear glittering eyes and gold spectacles of that odious relative to whom he was unhappily indebted even for food and raiment, for his past education, and all his future prospects in life—Lenora included; but who seemed to possess over him a power so unaccountable, so terrible and diabolical! Much of this he said to one or two friends whom he met on his way homeward, and the expressions were also remembered against him in the time that was to come.

Soon after he found himself secretly and imperatively summoned to the presence of the Herr, who—as he afterwards told the Burgomaster in the Palais de Justice—“bade him go sleep,” and sent his spirit on some mysterious errand, hundreds of miles away. What happened in the library of that lonely little chateau outside the Porte St. Croix, while his spiritual essence was thus absent, the unhappy Hendrik never could know, but when it re-entered his body—or when he awoke—he was horrified to find his learned uncle lying dead on the floor amid a pool of blood, his face and throat gashed by dreadful



wounds, which had evidently been inflicted by a blood-spotted knife which Hendrik found clutched in *his own right hand*! Blood gouts were over all his clothes, the pockets of which were found to be stuffed with money, jewels, and other valuables taken from a bureau and desk, which had been burst open and ransacked.

The soul of Hendrik died within him! Even if he had committed this crime in frenzy—and he felt certain that he did not do so—why should he have sought to rob his uncle? He then thought of Lenora, and of the sorrow and shame that would come upon her now; he reeled and fell senseless on the floor. The cries of the old housekeeper speedily brought aid; Hendrik was arrested, charged with assassination and robbery, and was at once consigned, as already described, to the Palais de Justice, where all the weird story came to light. The hatred and horror he had expressed of his dead uncle were now remembered fatally by all who had heard them; but the knife he had in his hand was, singularly enough, found to be the property of a soldier of the 2nd Belgian Infantry.

To the last Hendrik asserted his innocence, when tried and convicted for that which was, not unnaturally, deemed a most cruel and ungrateful crime; and his advocate, Père Baas, who, singularly enough, was



also a dabbler in mesmerism, laboured hard in his cause, but in vain. When brought to the scaffold in the Grande Place, Hendrik, attended by Brother Eusebius, had all the bearing of a martyr, as he fully believed that the crime committed, if by his hand, was at least by the dictate of another spirit.

Lenora visited him in the dreary cell the night before he died, and, according to '*La Patrie*,' as they parted, Hendrik said:

"Death, even on the scaffold, has no terror for me now. I know where my spirit will go, and that none on earth can recall it. You will come to me, beloved Lenora," he added, pointing upwards; "you will come to me there in heaven, where there can be no parting, no death, and no sorrow."

And, with one long embrace, they parted for ever.

The editor of '*La Patrie*,' writing of these things next day, said, not without truth, "Hendrik Van Gansendonck was, too probably, crazed; and if so, should not have been executed."

## SELECTING A GHOST.

### THE GHOSTS OF GORESTHORPE GRANGE.

I AM sure that Nature never intended me to be a self-made man. There are times when I can hardly bring myself to realize that twenty years of my life were spent behind the counter of a grocer's shop in the East End of London, and that it was through such an avenue that I reached a wealthy independence and the possession of Gores-thorpe Grange. My habits are Conservative, and my tastes refined and aristocratic. I have a soul which spurns the vulgar herd. Our family, the D'Odds, date back to a prehistoric era, as is to be inferred from the fact that their advent into British history is not commented on by any trustworthy historian. Some instinct tells me that the blood of a Crusader runs in my veins. Even now, after the lapse of so many years, such exclamations as "By'r Lady!" rise naturally to my lips, and I feel that, should circumstances require it, I am capable of



rising in my stirrups and dealing an infidel a blow—say with a mace—which would considerably astonish him.

Goresthorpe Grange is a feudal mansion—or so it was termed in the advertisement which originally brought it under my notice. Its right to this adjective had a most remarkable effect upon its price, and the advantages gained may possibly be more sentimental than real. Still, it is soothing to me to know that I have slits in my staircase through which I can discharge arrows; and there is a sense of power in the fact of possessing a complicated apparatus by means of which I am enabled to pour molten lead upon the head of the casual visitor. These things chime in with my peculiar humour, and I do not grudge to pay for them. I am proud of my battlements and of the circular uncovered sewer which girds me round. I am proud of my portcullis and donjon and keep. There is but one thing wanting to round off the mediævalism of my abode, and to render it symmetrically and completely antique. Goresthorpe Grange is not provided with a ghost.

Any man with old-fashioned tastes and ideas as to how such establishments should be conducted would have been disappointed at the omission. In my case it was particularly unfortunate. From my



childhood I had been an earnest student of the supernatural, and a firm believer in it. I have revelled in ghostly literature until there is hardly a tale bearing upon the subject which I have not perused. I learned the German language for the sole purpose of mastering a book upon demonology. When an infant I have secreted myself in dark rooms in the hope of seeing some of those bogies with which my nurse used to threaten me; and the same feeling is as strong in me now as then. It was a proud moment when I felt that a ghost was one of the luxuries which my money might command.

It is true that there was no mention of an apparition in the advertisement. On reviewing the mildewed walls, however, and the shadowy corridors, I had taken it for granted that there was such a thing on the premises. As the presence of a kennel presupposes that of a dog, so I imagined that it was impossible that such desirable quarters should be untenanted by one or more restless shades. Good heavens, what can the noble family from whom I purchased it have been doing during these hundreds of years! Was there no member of it spirited enough to make away with his sweetheart, or take some other steps calculated to establish a hereditary spectre? Even now I can hardly write with patience upon the subject.



For a long time I hoped against hope. Never did rat squeak behind the wainscot, or rain drip upon the attic-floor, without a wild thrill shooting through me as I thought that at last I had come upon traces of some unquiet soul. I felt no touch of fear upon these occasions. If it occurred in the night-time, I would send Mrs. D'Odd—who is a strong-minded woman—to investigate the matter while I covered up my head with the bedclothes and indulged in an ecstasy of expectation. Alas, the result was always the same! The suspicious sound would be traced to some cause so absurdly natural and commonplace that the most fervid imagination could not clothe it with any of the glamour of romance.

I might have reconciled myself to this state of things had it not been for Jorrocks of Havistock Farm. Jorrocks is a coarse, burly, matter-of-fact fellow, whom I only happen to know through the accidental circumstance of his fields adjoining my demesne. Yet this man, though utterly devoid of all appreciation of archæological unities, is in possession of a well-authenticated and undeniable spectre. Its existence only dates back, I believe, to the reign of the Second George, when a young lady cut her throat upon hearing of the death of her lover at the battle of Dettingen. Still, even that gives the house



an air of respectability, especially when coupled with bloodstains upon the floor. Jorrocks is densely unconscious of his good fortune; and his language when he reverts to the apparition is painful to listen to. He little dreams how I covet every one of those moans and nocturnal wails which he describes with unnecessary objurgation. Things are indeed coming to a pretty pass when democratic spectres are allowed to desert the landed proprietors and annul every social distinction by taking refuge in the houses of the great unrecognized.

I have a large amount of perseverance. Nothing else could have raised me into my rightful sphere, considering the uncongenial atmosphere in which I spent the earlier part of my life. I felt now that a ghost must be secured, but how to set about securing one was more than either Mrs. D'Odd or myself was able to determine. My reading taught me that such phenomena are usually the outcome of crime. What crime was to be done, then, and who was to do it? A wild idea entered my mind that Watkins, the house-steward, might be prevailed upon—for a consideration—to immolate himself or some one else in the interests of the establishment. I put the matter to him in a half-jesting manner; but it did not seem to strike him in a favourable light. The other servants sympathized with him



in his opinion—at least, I cannot account in any other way for their having left the house in a body the same afternoon.

“My dear,” Mrs. D’Odd remarked to me one day after dinner, as I sat moodily sipping a cup of sack—I love the good old names—“my dear, that odious ghost of Jorrocks’ has been gibbering again.”

“Let it gibber!” I answered recklessly.

Mrs. D’Odd struck a few chords on her virginal and looked thoughtfully into the fire.

“I’ll tell you what it is, Argentine,” she said at last, using the pet name which we usually substituted for Silas, “we must have a ghost sent down from London.”

“How can you be so idiotic, Matilda?” I remarked severely. “Who could get us such a thing?”

“My cousin, Jack Brocket, could,” she answered confidently.

Now, this cousin of Matilda’s was rather a sore subject between us. He was a rakish clever young fellow, who had tried his hand at many things, but wanted perseverance to succeed at any. He was, at that time, in chambers in London, professing to be a general agent, and really living, to a great extent, upon his wits. Matilda managed so that most of our business should pass through his hands, which certainly saved me a great deal of trouble; but I



found that Jack's commission was generally considerably larger than all the other items of the bill put together. It was this fact which made me feel inclined to rebel against any further negotiations with the young gentleman.

"O yes, he could," insisted Mrs. D., seeing the look of disapprobation upon my face. "You remember how well he managed that business about the crest?"

"It was only a resuscitation of the old family coat-of-arms, my dear," I protested.

Matilda smiled in an irritating manner. "There was a resuscitation of the family portraits, too, dear," she remarked. "You must allow that Jack selected them very judiciously."

I thought of the long line of faces which adorned the walls of my banqueting-hall, from the burly Norman robber, through every gradation of casque, plume, and ruff, to the sombre Chesterfieldian individual who appears to have staggered against a pillar in his agony at the return of a maiden MS. which he grips convulsively in his right hand. I was fain to confess that in that instance he had done his work well, and that it was only fair to give him an order—with the usual commission—for a family spectre, should such a thing be attainable.

It is one of my maxims to act promptly when once



my mind is made up. Noon of the next day found me ascending the spiral stone staircase which leads to Mr. Brocket's chambers, and admiring the succession of arrows and fingers upon the whitewashed wall, all indicating the direction of that gentleman's sanctum. As it happened, artificial aids of the sort were entirely unnecessary, as an animated flap-dance overhead could proceed from no other quarter, though it was replaced by a deathly silence as I groped my way up the stair. The door was opened by a youth evidently astounded at the appearance of a client, and I was ushered into the presence of my young friend, who was writing furiously in a large ledger—upside down, as I afterwards discovered.

After the first greetings, I plunged into business at once.

"Look here, Jack," I said, "I want you to get me a spirit, if you can."

"Spirits you mean!" shouted my wife's cousin, plunging his hand into the waste-paper basket and producing a bottle with the celerity of a conjuring trick. "Let's have a drink!"

I held up my hand as a mute appeal against such a proceeding so early in the day; but on lowering it again I found that I had almost involuntarily closed my fingers round the tumbler which my adviser had pressed upon me. I drank the contents



hastily off, lest any one should come in upon us and set me down as a toper. After all there was something very amusing about the young fellow's eccentricities.

"Not spirits," I explained smilingly; "an apparition—a ghost. If such a thing is to be had, I should be very willing to negotiate."

"A ghost for Goresthorpe Grange?" inquired Mr. Brocket, with as much coolness as if I had asked for a drawing-room suite.

"Quite so," I answered.

"Easiest thing in the world," said my companion, filling up my glass again in spite of my remonstrance. "Let us see!" Here he took down a large red note-book, with all the letters of the alphabet in a fringe down the edge. "A ghost you said, didn't you? That's G. G—gems—gimlets—gas-pipes—gauntlets—guns—galleys. Ah, here we are. Ghosts. Volume nine, section six, page forty-one. Excuse me!" And Jack ran up a ladder and began rummaging among a pile of ledgers on a high shelf. I felt half inclined to empty my glass into the spittoon when his back was turned; but on second thoughts I disposed of it in a legitimate way.

"Here it is!" cried my London agent, jumping off the ladder with a crash, and depositing an enormous volume of manuscript upon the table. "I



have all these things tabulated, so that I may lay my hands upon them in a moment. It's all right—it's quite weak" (here he filled our glasses again). "What were we looking up, again?"

"Ghosts," I suggested.

"Of course; page 41. Here we are. "J. H. Fowler & Son, Dunkel Street, suppliers of mediums to the nobility and gentry; charms sold—love-phil-tres—mummies—horoscopes cast." Nothing in your line there, I suppose?"

I shook my head despondently.

"Frederick Tabb," continued my wife's cousin, "sole channel of communication between the living and the dead. Proprietor of the spirits of Byron, Kirke White, Grimaldi, Tom Cribb, and Inigo Jones. That's about the figure!"

"Nothing romantic enough there," I objected. "Good heavens! Fancy a ghost with a black eye and a handkerchief tied round its waist, or turning summersaults, and saying, 'How are you to-morrow?'" The very idea made me so warm that I emptied my glass and filled it again.

"Here is another," said my companion, "Christopher McCarthy; bi-weekly séances—attended by all the eminent spirits of ancient and modern times. Nativities—charms—abracadabras, messages from the dead." He might be able to help us. However,



I shall have a hunt round myself to-morrow, and see some of these fellows. I know their haunts, and it's odd if I can't pick up something cheap. So there's an end of business," he concluded, hurling the ledger into the corner, "and now we'll have something to drink."

We had several things to drink—so many that my inventive faculties were dulled next morning, and I had some little difficulty in explaining to Mrs. D'Odd why it was that I hung my boots and spectacles upon a peg along with my other garments before retiring to rest. The new hopes excited by the confident manner in which my agent had undertaken the commission caused me to rise superior to alcoholic reaction, and I paced about the rambling corridors and old-fashioned rooms, picturing to myself the appearance of my expected acquisition, and deciding what part of the building would harmonize best with its presence. After much consideration, I pitched upon the banqueting-hall as being, on the whole, most suitable for its reception. It was a long low room, hung round with valuable tapestry and interesting relics of the old family to whom it had belonged. Coats of mail and implements of war glimmered fitfully as the light of the fire played over them, and the wind crept under the door, moving the hangings to and fro with a ghastly



rustling. At one end there was the raised dais, on which in ancient times the host and his guests used to spread their table, while a descent of a couple of steps led to the lower part of the hall, where the vassals and retainers held wassail. The floor was uncovered by any sort of carpet, but a layer of rushes had been scattered over it by my direction. In the whole room there was nothing to remind one of the nineteenth century; except, indeed, my own solid silver plate, stamped with the resuscitated family arms, which was laid out upon an oak table in the centre. This, I determined, should be the haunted room, supposing my wife's cousin to succeed in his negotiation with the spirit-mongers. There was nothing for it now but to wait patiently until I heard some news of the result of his inquiries.

A letter came in the course of a few days, which, if it was short, was at least encouraging. It was scribbled in pencil on the back of a playbill, and sealed apparently with a tobacco-stopper. "Am on the track," it said. "Nothing of the sort to be had from any professional spiritualist, but picked up a fellow in a pub yesterday who says he can manage it for you. Will send him down unless you wire to the contrary. Abrahams is his name, and he has done one or two of these jobs before." The letter



wound up with some incoherent allusions to a cheque, and was signed by my affectionate cousin, John Bocket.

I need hardly say that I did not wire, but awaited the arrival of Mr. Abrahams with all impatience. In spite of my belief in the supernatural, I could scarcely credit the fact that any mortal could have such a command over the spirit-world as to deal in them and barter them against mere earthly gold. Still, I had Jack's word for it that such a trade existed; and here was a gentleman with a Judaical name ready to demonstrate it by proof positive. How vulgar and commonplace Jorrocks' eighteenth-century ghost would appear should I succeed in securing a real mediæval apparition! I almost thought that one had been sent down in advance, for, as I walked round the moat that night before retiring to rest, I came upon a dark figure engaged in surveying the machinery of my portcullis and drawbridge. His start of surprise, however, and the manner in which he hurried off into the darkness, speedily convinced me of his earthly origin, and I put him down as some admirer of one of my female retainers mourning over the muddy Hellespont which divided him from his love. Whoever he may have been, he disappeared and did not return, though I loitered about for some time in the hope of catch-



ing a glimpse of him and exercising my feudal rights upon his person.

Jack Brocket was as good as his word. The shades of another evening were beginning to darken round Goresthorpe Grange, when a peal at the outer bell, and the sound of a fly pulling up, announced the arrival of Mr. Abrahams. I hurried down to meet him, half expecting to see a choice assortment of ghosts crowding in at his rear. Instead, however, of being the sallow-faced, melancholy-eyed man that I had pictured to myself, the ghost-dealer was a sturdy little podgy fellow, with a pair of wonderfully keen sparkling eyes and a mouth which was constantly stretched in a good-humoured, if somewhat artificial, grin. His sole stock-in-trade seemed to consist of a small leather bag jealously locked and strapped, which emitted a metallic chink upon being placed on the stone flags of the hall.

"And 'ow are you, sir?" he asked, wringing my hand with the utmost effusion. "And the missus, 'ow is she? And all the others—'ow's all their 'ealth?"

I intimated that we were all as well as could reasonably be expected; but Mr. Abrahams happened to catch a glimpse of Mrs. D'Odd in the distance, and at once plunged at her with another string of inquiries as to her health, delivered so volubly and



with such an intense earnestness that I half expected to see him terminate his cross-examination by feeling her pulse and demanding a sight of her tongue. All this time his little eyes rolled round and round, shifting perpetually from the floor to the ceiling, and from the ceiling to the walls, taking in apparently every article of furniture in a single comprehensive glance.

Having satisfied himself that neither of us was in a pathological condition, Mr. Abrahams suffered me to lead him up-stairs, where a repast had been laid out for him to which he did ample justice. The mysterious little bag he carried along with him, and deposited it under his chair during the meal. It was not until the table had been cleared and we were left together that he broached the matter on which he had come down.

"I hunderstand," he remarked, puffing at a trichinopoly, "that you want my 'elp in fitting up this 'ere 'ouse with a happarition."

I acknowledged the correctness of his surmise, while mentally wondering at those restless eyes of his, which still danced about the room as if he were making an inventory of the contents.

"And you won't find a better man for the job, though I says it as shouldn't," continued my companion. "Wot did I say to the young gent wot



spoke to me in the bar of the *Lame Dog*? ‘Can you do it?’ says he. ‘Try me,’ says I, ‘me and my bag. Just try me.’ I couldn’t say fairer than that.”

My respect for Jack Bocket’s business capacities began to go up very considerably. He certainly seemed to have managed the matter wonderfully well. “You don’t mean to say that you carry ghosts about in bags!” I remarked, with diffidence.

Mr. Abrahams smiled a smile of superior knowledge. “You wait,” he said; “give me the right place and the right hour, with a little of the essence of *Lucoptolycus*”—here he produced a small bottle from his waistcoat-pocket—“and you won’t find no ghost that I ain’t up to. You’ll see them yourself, and pick your own, and I can’t say fairer than that.”

As all Mr. Abrahams’ protestations of fairness were accompanied by a cunning leer and a wink from one or other of his wicked little eyes, the impression of candour was somewhat weakened.

“When are you going to do it?” I asked reverentially.

“Ten minutes to one in the morning,” said Mr. Abrahams, with decision. “Some says midnight, but I says ten to one, when there ain’t such a crowd, and you can pick your own ghost. And now,” he continued, rising to his feet, “suppose you trot me



round the premises, and let me see where you wants it; for there's some places as attracts 'em, and some as they won't hear of—not if there was no other place in the world.”

Mr. Abrahams inspected our corridors and chambers with a most critical and observant eye, fingering the old tapestry with the air of a connoisseur, and remarking in an undertone that it would “match uncommon nice.” It was not until he reached the banqueting-hall, however, which I had myself picked out, that his admiration reached the pitch of enthusiasm. “’Ere’s the place!” he shouted, dancing, bag in hand, round the table on which my plate was lying, and looking not unlike some quaint little goblin himself. “’Ere’s the place; we won’t get nothin’ to beat this! A fine room—noble, solid, none of your electro-plate trash! That’s the way as things ought to be done, sir. Plenty of room for ’em to glide here. Send up some brandy and the box of weeds; I’ll sit here by the fire and do the preliminaries, which is more trouble than you’d think; for them ghosts carries on hawful at times, before they finds out who they’ve got to deal with. If you was in the room they’d tear you to pieces as like as not. You leave me alone to tackle them, and at half-past twelve come in, and I lay they’ll be quiet enough by then.”



Mr. Abrahams' request struck me as a reasonable one, so I left him with his feet upon the mantelpiece, and his chair in front of the fire, fortifying himself with stimulants against his refractory visitors. From the room beneath, in which I sat with Mrs. D'Odd, I could hear that after sitting for some time he rose up, and paced about the hall with quick impatient steps. We then heard him try the lock of the door, and afterwards drag some heavy article of furniture in the direction of the window, on which, apparently, he mounted, for I heard the creaking of the rusty hinges as the diamond-paned casement folded backwards, and I knew it to be situated several feet above the little man's reach. Mrs. D'Odd says that she could distinguish his voice speaking in low and rapid whispers after this, but that may have been her imagination. I confess that I began to feel more impressed than I had deemed it possible to be. There was something awesome in the thought of the solitary mortal standing by the open window and summoning in from the gloom outside the spirits of the nether world. It was with a trepidation which I could hardly disguise from Matilda that I observed that the clock was pointing to half-past twelve, and that the time had come for me to share the vigil of my visitor.

He was sitting in his old position when I entered,



and there were no signs of the mysterious movements which I had overheard, though his chubby face was flushed as with recent exertion.

"Are you succeeding all right?" I asked as I came in, putting on as careless an air as possible, but glancing involuntarily round the room to see if we were alone.

"Only your help is needed to complete the matter," said Mr. Abrahams, in a solemn voice. "You shall sit by me and partake of the essence of *Lucoptolycus*, which removes the scales from our earthly eyes. Whatever you may chance to see, speak not and make no movement, lest you break the spell." His manner was subdued, and his usual cockney vulgarity had entirely disappeared. I took the chair which he indicated, and awaited the result.

My companion cleared the rushes from the floor in our neighbourhood, and, going down upon his hands and knees, described a half-circle with chalk, which enclosed the fireplace and ourselves. Round the edge of this half-circle he drew several hieroglyphics, not unlike the signs of the zodiac. He then stood up and uttered a long invocation, delivered so rapidly that it sounded like a single gigantic word in some uncouth guttural language. Having finished this prayer, if prayer it was, he pulled out the small bottle which he had produced before, and poured



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a couple of teaspoonfuls of clear transparent fluid into a phial, which he handed to me with an intimation that I should drink it.

The liquid had a faintly sweet odour, not unlike the aroma of certain sorts of apples. I hesitated a moment before applying it to my lips, but an impatient gesture from my companion overcame my scruples, and I tossed it off. The taste was not unpleasant; and, as it gave rise to no immediate effects, I leaned back in my chair and composed myself for what was to come. Mr. Abrahams seated himself beside me, and I felt that he was watching my face from time to time while repeating some more of the invocations in which he had indulged before.

A sense of delicious warmth and languor began gradually to steal over me, partly, perhaps, from the heat of the fire, and partly from some unexplained cause. An uncontrollable impulse to sleep weighed down my eyelids, while, at the same time, my brain worked actively, and a hundred beautiful and pleasing ideas flitted through it. So utterly lethargic did I feel that, though I was aware that my companion put his hand over the region of my heart, as if to feel how it were beating, I did not attempt to prevent him, nor did I even ask him for the reason of his action. Everything in the room appeared to



be reeling slowly round in a drowsy dance, of which I was the centre. The great elk's head at the far end wagged solemnly backwards and forwards, while the massive salvers on the tables performed cotillons with the claret-cooler and the epergne. My head fell upon my breast from sheer heaviness, and I should have become unconscious had I not been recalled to myself by the opening of the door at the other end of the hall.

This door led on to the raised daïs, which, as I have mentioned, the heads of the house used to reserve for their own use. As it swung slowly back upon its hinges, I sat up in my chair, clutching at the arms, and staring with a horrified glare at the dark passage outside. Something was coming down it—something unformed and intangible, but still a *something*. Dim and shadowy, I saw it flit across the threshold, while a blast of ice-cold air swept down the room, which seemed to blow through me, chilling my very heart. I was aware of the mysterious presence, and then I heard it speak in a voice like the sighing of an east wind among pine-trees on the banks of a desolate sea.

It said: "I am the invisible nonentity. I have affinities and am subtle. I am electric, magnetic, and spiritualistic. I am the great ethereal sigh-heaver. I kill dogs. Mortal, wilt thou choose me?"



I was about to speak, but the words seemed to be choked in my throat; and, before I could get them out, the shadow flitted across the hall and vanished in the darkness at the other side, while a long-drawn melancholy sigh quivered through the apartment.

I turned my eyes towards the door once more, and beheld, to my astonishment, a very small old woman, who hobbled along the corridor and into the hall. She passed backwards and forwards several times, and then, crouching down at the very edge of the circle upon the floor, she disclosed a face the horrible malignity of which shall never be banished from my recollection. Every foul passion appeared to have left its mark upon that hideous countenance.

“Ha! ha!” she screamed, holding out her wizened hands like the talons of an unclean bird. “You see what I am. I am the fiendish old woman. I wear snuff-coloured silks. My curse descends on people. Sir Walter was partial to me. Shall I be thine, mortal?”

I endeavoured to shake my head in horror; on which she aimed a blow at me with her crutch, and vanished with an eldritch scream.

By this time my eyes turned naturally towards the open door, and I was hardly surprised to see a man walk in of tall and noble stature. His face



was deadly pale, but was surmounted by a fringe of dark hair which fell in ringlets down his back. A short pointed beard covered his chin. He was dressed in loose-fitting clothes, made apparently of yellow satin, and a large white ruff surrounded his neck. He paced across the room with slow and majestic strides. Then turning, he addressed me in a sweet, exquisitely-modulated voice.

"I am the cavalier," he remarked. "I pierce and am pierced. Here is my rapier. I clink steel. This is a blood-stain over my heart. I can emit hollow groans. I am patronized by many old Conservative families. I am the original manor-house apparition. I work alone, or in company with shrieking damsels."

He bent his head courteously, as though awaiting my reply, but the same choking sensation prevented me from speaking; and, with a deep bow, he disappeared.

He had hardly gone before a feeling of intense horror stole over me, and I was aware of the presence of a ghastly creature in the room of dim outlines and uncertain proportions. One moment it seemed to pervade the entire apartment, while at another it would become invisible, but always leaving behind it a distinct consciousness of its presence. Its voice, when it spoke, was quavering and gusty. It said,



"I am the leaver of footsteps and the spiller of goutts of blood. I tramp upon corridors. Charles Dickens has alluded to me. I make strange and disagreeable noises. I snatch letters and place invisible hands on people's wrists. I am cheerful. I burst into peals of hideous laughter. Shall I do one now?" I raised my hand in a deprecating way, but too late to prevent one discordant outbreak which echoed through the room. Before I could lower it the apparition was gone.

I turned my head towards the door in time to see a man come hastily and stealthily into the chamber. He was a sunburnt powerfully-built fellow, with earrings in his ears and a Barcelona handkerchief tied loosely round his neck. His head was bent upon his chest, and his whole aspect was that of one afflicted by intolerable remorse. He paced rapidly backwards and forwards like a caged tiger, and I observed that a drawn knife glittered in one of his hands, while he grasped what appeared to be a piece of parchment in the other. His voice, when he spoke, was deep and sonorous. He said, "I am a murderer. I am a ruffian. I crouch when I walk. I step noiselessly. I know something of the Spanish Main. I can do the lost treasure business. I have charts. Am able-bodied and a good walker. Capable of haunting a large park." He looked towards



me beseechingly, but before I could make a sign I was paralysed by the horrible sight which appeared at the door.

It was a very tall man, if, indeed, it might be called a man, for the gaunt bones were protruding through the corroding flesh, and the features were of a leaden hue. A winding-sheet was wrapped round the figure, and formed a hood over the head, from under the shadow of which two fiendish eyes, deepset in their grisly sockets, blazed and sparkled like red-hot coals. The lower jaw had fallen upon the breast, disclosing a withered, shrivelled tongue and two lines of black and jagged fangs. I shuddered and drew back as this fearful apparition advanced to the edge of the circle.

"I am the American blood-curdler," it said, in a voice which seemed to come in a hollow murmur from the earth beneath it. "None other is genuine. I am the embodiment of Edgar Allan Poe. I am circumstantial and horrible. I am a low-caste spirit-subduing spectre. Observe my blood and my bones. I am grisly and nauseous. No depending on artificial aid. Work with grave-clothes, a coffin-lid, and a galvanic battery. Turn hair white in a night." The creature stretched out its fleshless arms to me as if in entreaty, but I shook my head; and it vanished, leaving a low, sickening, repulsive



odour behind it. I sank back in my chair, so overcome by terror and disgust that I would have very willingly resigned myself to dispensing with a ghost altogether, could I have been sure that this was the last of the hideous procession.

A faint sound of trailing garments warned me that it was not so. I looked up, and beheld a white figure emerging from the corridor into the light. As it stepped across the threshold I saw that it was that of a young and beautiful woman dressed in the fashion of a bygone day. Her hands were clasped in front of her, and her pale proud face bore traces of passion and of suffering. She crossed the hall with a gentle sound, like the rustling of autumn leaves, and then, turning her lovely and unutterably sad eyes upon me, she said,

“I am the plaintive and sentimental, the beautiful and ill-used. I have been forsaken and betrayed. I shriek in the night-time and glide down passages. My antecedents are highly respectable and generally aristocratic. My tastes are æsthetic. Old oak furniture like this would do, with a few more coats of mail and plenty of tapestry. Will you not take me?”

Her voice died away in a beautiful cadence as she concluded, and she held out her hands as if in supplication. I am always sensitive to female



influences. Besides, what would Jorrocks' ghost be to this? Could anything be in better taste? Would I not be exposing myself to the chance of injuring my nervous system by interviews with such creatures as my last visitor, unless I decided at once? She gave me a seraphic smile, as if she knew what was passing in my mind. That smile settled the matter. "She will do!" I cried; "I choose this one;" and as, in my enthusiasm, I took a step towards her I passed over the magic circle which had girdled me round.

"Argentine, we have been robbed!"

I had an indistinct consciousness of these words being spoken, or rather screamed, in my ear a great number of times without my being able to grasp their meaning. A violent throbbing in my head seemed to adapt itself to their rhythm, and I closed my eyes to the lullaby of "Robbed, robbed, robbed." A vigorous shake caused me to open them again, however, and the sight of Mrs. D'Odd in the scantiest of costumes and most furious of tempers was sufficiently impressive to recall all my scattered thoughts, and make me realize that I was lying on my back on the floor, with my head among the ashes which had fallen from last night's fire, and a small glass phial in my hand.

I staggered to my feet, but felt so weak and giddy



that I was compelled to fall back into a chair. As my brain became clearer, stimulated by the exclamations of Matilda, I began gradually to recollect the events of the night. There was the door through which my supernatural visitors had filed. There was the circle of chalk with the hieroglyphics round the edge. There was the cigar-box and brandy-bottle which had been honoured by the attentions of Mr. Abrahams. But the seer himself—where was he? and what was this open window with a rope running out of it? And where, O where, was the pride of Goresthorpe Grange, the glorious plate which was to have been the delectation of generations of D'Odds? And why was Mrs. D. standing in the grey light of dawn, wringing her hands and repeating her monotonous refrain? It was only very gradually that my misty brain took these things in, and grasped the connection between them.

Reader, I have never seen Mr. Abrahams since; I have never seen the plate stamped with the resuscitated family crest; hardest of all, I have never caught a glimpse of the melancholy spectre with the trailing garments, nor do I expect that I ever shall. In fact my night's experiences have cured me of my mania for the supernatural, and quite reconciled me to inhabiting the humdrum nine-



teenth-century edifice on the outskirts of London which Mrs. D. has long had in her mind's eye.

As to the explanation of all that occurred—that is a matter which is open to several surmises. That Mr. Abrahams, the ghost-hunter, was identical with Jemmy Wilson, *alias* the Nottingham crackster, is considered more than probable at Scotland Yard, and certainly the description of that remarkable burglar tallied very well with the appearance of my visitor. The small bag which I have described was picked up in a neighbouring field next day, and found to contain a choice assortment of jemmies and centrebits. Footmarks deeply imprinted in the mud on either side of the moat showed that an accomplice from below had received the sack of precious metals which had been let down through the open window. No doubt the pair of scoundrels, while looking round for a job, had overheard Jack Bocket's indiscreet inquiries, and had promptly availed themselves of the tempting opening.

And now as to my less substantial visitors, and the curious grotesque vision which I had enjoyed—am I to lay it down to any real power over occult matters possessed by my Nottingham friend? For a long time I was doubtful upon the point, and eventually endeavoured to solve it by consulting a well-known analyst and medical man, sending him



the few drops of the so-called essence of *Lucoptolycus* which remained in my phial. I append the letter which I received from him, only too happy to have the opportunity of winding up my little narrative by the weighty words of a man of learning.

“*Arundel Street.*”

“DEAR SIR,—Your very singular case has interested me extremely. The bottle which you sent contained a strong solution of chloral, and the quantity which you describe yourself as having swallowed must have amounted to at least eighty grains of the pure hydrate. This would of course have reduced you to a partial state of insensibility, gradually going on to complete coma. In this semi-unconscious state of chloralism it is not unusual for circumstantial and *bizarre* visions to present themselves—more especially to individuals unaccustomed to the use of the drug. You tell me in your note that your mind was saturated with ghostly literature, and that you had long taken a morbid interest in classifying and recalling the various forms in which apparitions have been said to appear. You must also remember that you were expecting to see something of that very nature, and that your nervous system was worked up to an unnatural state of tension. Under the circumstances, I think that, far from the sequel

being an astonishing one, it would have been very surprising indeed to any one versed in narcotics had you not experienced some such effects.—I remain, dear sir, sincerely yours,

“T. E. STUBE, M.D.

“Argentine D’Odd, Esq.

“The Elms, Brixton.”



## THE MYSTERY OF SASASSA VALLEY.\*

### A SOUTH AFRICAN STORY.

Do I know why Tom Donahue is called "Lucky Tom"? Yes; I do; and that is more than one in ten of those who call him so can say. I have knocked about a deal in my time, and seen some strange sights, but none stranger than the way in which Tom gained that sobriquet and his fortune with it. For I was with him at the time.—Tell it? Oh, certainly; but it is a longish story and a very strange one; so fill up your glass again, and light another cigar while I try to reel it off. Yes; a very strange one; beats some fairy stories I have heard; but it's true, sir, every word of it. There are men alive at Cape Colony now who'll remember it and confirm what I say. Many a time has the tale been told round the fire in Boers' cabins from Orange State to Griqualand; yes, and out in the Bush and at the Diamond Fields too.

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I'm roughish now, sir; but I was entered at the Middle Temple once, and studied for the Bar. Tom—worse luck!—was one of my fellow-students; and a wildish time we had of it, until at last our finances ran short, and we were compelled to give up our so-called studies, and look about for some part of the world where two young fellows with strong arms and sound constitutions might make their mark. In those days the tide of emigration had scarcely begun to set in towards Africa, and so we thought our best chance would be down at Cape Colony. Well—to make a long story short—we set sail, and were deposited in Cape Town with less than five pounds in our pockets; and there we parted. We each tried our hands at many things, and had ups and downs; but when, at the end of three years, chance led each of us up-country and we met again, we were, I regret to say, in almost as bad a plight as when we started.

Well, this was not much of a commencement; and very disheartened we were, so disheartened that Tom spoke of going back to England and getting a clerkship. For you see we didn't know that we had played out all our small cards, and that the trumps were going to turn up. No; we thought our "hands" were bad all through. It was a very lonely part of the country that we were in, inhabited by a few



scattered farmers, whose houses were stockaded and fenced in to defend them against the Kaffirs. Tom Donahue and I had a little hut right out in the Bush; but we were known to possess nothing, and to be handy with our revolvers, so we had little to fear. There we waited, doing odd jobs, and hoping that something would turn up. Well, after we had been there about a month something did turn up upon a certain night, something which was the making of both of us; and it's about that night, sir, that I'm going to tell you. I remember it well. The wind was howling past our cabin, and the rain threatened to burst in our rude window. We had a great wood-fire crackling and sputtering on the hearth, by which I was sitting mending a whip, while Tom was lying in his bunk groaning disconsolately at the chance which had led him to such a place.

"Cheer up, Tom—cheer up," said I. "No man ever knows what may be awaiting him."

"Ill-luck, ill-luck, Jack," he answered. "I always was an unlucky dog. Here have I been three years in this abominable country; and I see lads fresh from England jingling the money in their pockets, while I am as poor as when I landed. Ah, Jack, if you want to keep your head above water, old friend, you must try your fortune away from me."



"Nonsense, Tom; you're down in your luck to-night. But hark! Here's some one coming outside. Dick Wharton, by the tread; he'll rouse you, if any man can."

Even as I spoke the door was flung open, and honest Dick Wharton, with the water pouring from him, stepped in, his hearty red face looming through the haze like a harvest-moon. He shook himself, and after greeting us sat down by the fire to warm himself.

"Whereaway, Dick, on such a night as this?" said I. "You'll find the rheumatism a worse foe than the Kaffirs, unless you keep more regular hours."

Dick was looking unusually serious, almost frightened, one would say, if one did not know the man. "Had to go," he replied—"had to go. One of Madison's cattle was seen straying down Sasassa Valley, and of course none of our blacks would go down *that* Valley at night; and if we had waited till morning, the brute would have been in Kaffirland."

"Why wouldn't they go down Sasassa Valley at night?" asked Tom.

"Kaffirs, I suppose," said I.

"Ghosts," said Dick.

We both laughed.



"I suppose they didn't give such a matter-of-fact fellow as you a sight of their charms?" said Tom from the bunk.

"Yes," said Dick seriously—"yes; I saw what the niggers talk about; and I promise you, lads, I don't want ever to see it again."

Tom sat up in his bed. "Nonsense, Dick; you're joking, man! Come, tell us all about it. The legend first, and your own experience afterwards. Pass him over the bottle, Jack."

"Well, as to the legend," began Dick,—“it seems that the niggers have had it handed down to them that that Sasassa Valley is haunted by a frightful fiend. Hunters and wanderers passing down the defile have seen its glowing eyes under the shadows of the cliff; and the story goes that whoever has chanced to encounter that baleful glare, has had his after-life blighted by the malignant power of this creature. Whether that be true or not,” continued Dick ruefully, “I may have an opportunity of judging for myself.”

"Go on, Dick—go on," cried Tom. "Let's hear about what you saw."

"Well, I was groping down the Valley, looking for that cow of Madison's, and I had, I suppose, got half-way down, where a black craggy cliff juts into the ravine on the right, when I halted to have a



pull at my flask. I had my eye fixed at the time upon the projecting cliff I have mentioned, and noticed nothing unusual about it. I then put up my flask and took a step or two forward, when in a moment there burst apparently from the base of the rock, about eight feet from the ground and a hundred yards from me, a strange lurid glare, flickering and oscillating, gradually dying away and then reappearing again.—No, no; I've seen many a glow-worm and fire-fly—nothing of that sort. There it was burning away, and I suppose I gazed at it, trembling in every limb, for fully ten minutes. Then I took a step forwards, when instantly it vanished, vanished like a candle blown out. I stopped back again; but it was some time before I could find the exact spot and position from which it was visible. At last, there it was, the weird reddish light, flickering away as before. Then I screwed up my courage, and made for the rock; but the ground was so uneven that it was impossible to steer straight; and though I walked along the whole base of the cliff, I could see nothing. Then I made tracks for home; and I can tell you, boys, that until you remarked it, I never knew it was raining, the whole way along.—But hollo! what's the matter with Tom?"

What indeed? Tom was now sitting with his



legs over the side of the bunk, and his whole face betraying excitement so intense as to be almost painful. "The fiend would have two eyes. How many lights did you see, Dick? Speak out!"

"Only one."

"Hurrah!" cried Tom—"that's better." Whereupon he kicked the blankets into the middle of the room, and began pacing up and down with long feverish strides. Suddenly he stopped opposite Dick, and laid his hand upon his shoulder: "I say, Dick, could we get to Sasassa Valley before sunrise?"

"Scarcely," said Dick.

"Well, look here; we are old friends, Dick Wharton, you and I. Now, don't you tell any other man what you have told us, for a week. You'll promise that; won't you?"

I could see by the look on Dick's face as he acquiesced that he considered poor Tom to be mad; and indeed I was myself completely mystified by his conduct. I had, however, seen so many proofs of my friend's good sense and quickness of apprehension, that I thought it quite possible that Wharton's story had had a meaning in his eyes which I was too obtuse to take in.

All night Tom Donahue was greatly excited, and when Wharton left he begged him to remember his promise, and also elicited from him a description of



the exact spot at which he had seen the apparition, as well as the hour at which it appeared. After his departure, which must have been about four in the morning, I turned into my bunk and watched Tom sitting by the fire splicing two sticks together, until I fell asleep. I suppose I must have slept about two hours; but when I awoke Tom was still sitting working away in almost the same position. He had fixed the one stick across the top of the other so as to form a rough T, and was now busy in fitting a smaller stick into the angle between them, by manipulating which, the cross one could be either cocked up or depressed to any extent. He had cut notches too in the perpendicular stick, so that by the aid of the small prop, the cross one could be kept in any position for an indefinite time.

"Look here, Jack!" he cried, whenever he saw that I was awake. "Come, and give me your opinion. Suppose I put this cross-stick pointing straight at a thing, and arranged this small one so as to keep it so, and left it, I could find that thing again if I wanted it—don't you think I could, Jack—don't you think so?" he continued nervously, clutching me by the arm.

"Well," I answered, "it would depend on how far off the thing was, and how accurately it was pointed. If it were any distance, I'd cut sights on your cross-



stick; then a string tied to the end of it, and held in a plumb-line forwards, would lead you pretty near what you wanted. But surely, Tom, you don't intend to localize the ghost in that way?"

"You'll see to-night, old friend—you'll see to-night. I'll carry this to the Sasassa Valley. You get the loan of Madison's crowbar, and come with me; but mind you tell no man where you are going, or what you want it for."

All day Tom was walking up and down the room, or working hard at the apparatus. His eyes were glistening, his cheeks hectic, and he had all the symptoms of high fever. "Heaven grant that Dick's diagnosis be not correct!" I thought, as I returned with the crowbar; and yet, as evening drew near, I found myself imperceptibly sharing the excitement.

About six o'clock Tom sprang to his feet and seized his sticks. "I can stand it no longer, Jack," he cried; "up with your crowbar, and hey for Sasassa Valley! To-night's work, my lad, will either make us or mar us! Take your six-shooter, in case we meet the Kaffirs. I daren't take mine, Jack," he continued, putting his hands upon my shoulders—"I daren't take mine; for if my ill-luck sticks to me to-night, I don't know what I might not do with it."

Well, having filled our pockets with provisions,



we set out, and as we took our wearisome way towards the Sasassa Valley, I frequently attempted to elicit from my companion some clue as to his intentions. But his only answer was: "Let us hurry on, Jack. Who knows how many have heard of Wharton's adventure by this time! Let us hurry on, or we may not be first in the field!"

Well, sir, we struggled on through the hills for a matter of ten miles; till at last, after descending a crag, we saw opening out in front of us a ravine so sombre and dark that it might have been the gate of Hades itself; cliffs many hundred feet shut in on every side the gloomy boulder-studded passage which led through the haunted defile into Kaffirland. The moon rising above the crags, threw into strong relief the rough irregular pinnacles of rock by which they were topped, while all below was dark as Erebus.

"The Sasassa Valley?" said I.

"Yes," said Tom.

I looked at him. He was calm now; the flush and feverishness had passed away; his actions were deliberate and slow. Yet there was a certain rigidity in his face and glitter in his eye which showed that a crisis had come.

We entered the pass, stumbling along amid the great boulders. Suddenly I heard a short quick



exclamation from Tom. "That's the crag!" he cried, pointing to a great mass looming before us in the darkness. "Now, Jack, for any favour use your eyes! We're about a hundred yards from that cliff, I take it; so you move slowly towards one side, and I'll do the same towards the other. When you see anything, stop, and call out. Don't take more than twelve inches in a step, and keep your eye fixed on the cliff about eight feet from the ground. Are you ready?"

"Yes." I was even more excited than Tom by this time. What his intention or object was, I could not conjecture, beyond that he wanted to examine by daylight the part of the cliff from which the light came. Yet the influence of the romantic situation and my companion's suppressed excitement was so great, that I could feel the blood coursing through my veins and count the pulses throbbing at my temples.

"Start!" cried Tom; and we moved off, he to the right, I to the left, each with our eyes fixed intently on the base of the crag. I had moved perhaps twenty feet, when in a moment it burst upon me. Through the growing darkness there shone a small ruddy glowing point, the light from which waned and increased, flickered and oscillated, each change producing a more weird effect than the



last. The old Kaffir superstition came into my mind, and I felt a cold shudder pass over me. In my excitement, I stepped a pace backwards, when instantly the light went out, leaving utter darkness in its place; but when I advanced again, there was the ruddy glare glowing from the base of the cliff. "Tom, Tom!" I cried.

"Ay, ay!" I heard him exclaim, as he hurried over towards me.

"There it is—there, up against the cliff!"

Tom was at my elbow. "I see nothing," said he.

"Why, there, there, man, in front of you!" I stepped to the right as I spoke, when the light instantly vanished from my eyes.

But from Tom's ejaculations of delight it was clear that from my former position it was visible to him also. "Jack," he cried, as he turned and wrung my hand—"Jack, you and I can never complain of our luck again. Now heap up a few stones where we are standing.—That's right. Now we must fix my sign-post firmly in at the top. There! It would take a strong wind to blow that down; and we only need it to hold out till morning. O Jack, my boy, to think that only yesterday we were talking of becoming clerks, and you saying that no man knew what was awaiting him too! By Jove, Jack, it would make a good story!"



By this time we had firmly fixed the perpendicular stick in between two large stones; and Tom bent down and peered along the horizontal one. For fully a quarter of an hour he was alternately raising and depressing it, until at last, with a sigh of satisfaction, he fixed the prop into the angle, and stood up. "Look along, Jack," he said. "You have as straight an eye to take a sight as any man I know of."

I looked along. There, beyond the further sight was the ruddy scintillating speck, apparently at the end of the stick itself, so accurately had it been adjusted.

"And now, my boy," said Tom, "let's have some supper, and a sleep. There's nothing more to be done to-night; but we'll need all our wits and strength to-morrow. Get some sticks, and kindle a fire here, and then we'll be able to keep an eye on our signal-post, and see that nothing happens to it during the night."

Well, sir, we kindled a fire, and had supper with the Sasassa demon's eye rolling and glowing in front of us the whole night through. Not always in the same place though; for after supper, when I glanced along the sights to have another look at it, it was nowhere to be seen. The information did not, however, seem to disturb Tom in any way. He merely



remarked : " It's the moon, not the thing, that has shifted ;" and coiling himself up, went to sleep.

By early dawn we were both up, and gazing along our pointer at the cliff; but we could make out nothing save the one dead monotonous slaty surface, rougher perhaps at the part we were examining than elsewhere, but otherwise presenting nothing remarkable.

" Now for your idea, Jack !" said Tom Donahue, unwinding a long thin cord from round his waist. " You fasten it, and guide me while I take the other end." So saying he walked off to the base of the cliff, holding one end of the cord, while I drew the other taut, and wound it round the middle of the horizontal stick, passing it through the sight at the end. By this means I could direct Tom to the right or left, until we had our string stretching from the point of attachment, through the sight, and on to the rock, which it struck about eight feet from the ground. Tom drew a chalk circle of about three feet diameter round the spot, and then called to me to come and join him. " We've managed this business together, Jack," he said, " and we'll find what we are to find, together." The circle he had drawn embraced a part of the rock smoother than the rest, save that about the centre there were a few rough protuberances or knobs. One of these Tom pointed



to with a cry of delight. It was a roughish, brownish mass about the size of a man's closed fist, and looking like a bit of dirty glass let into the wall of the cliff. "That's it!" he cried—"that's it!"

"That's what?"

"Why, man, *a diamond*, and such a one as there isn't a monarch in Europe but would envy Tom Donahue the possession of. Up with your crowbar, and we'll soon exorcise the demon of Sasassa Valley!"

I was so astounded that for a moment I stood speechless with surprise, gazing at the treasure which had so unexpectedly fallen into our hands.

"Here, hand me the crowbar," said Tom. "Now, by using this little round knob which projects from the cliff here, as a fulcrum, we may be able to lever it off.—Yes; there it goes. I never thought it could have come so easily. Now, Jack, the sooner we get back to our hut and then down to Cape Town, the better."

We wrapped up our treasure, and made our way across the hills, towards home. On the way, Tom told me how, while a law-student in the Middle Temple, he had come upon a dusty pamphlet in the library, by one Jans van Hounym, which told of an experience very similar to ours, which had befallen that worthy Dutchman in the latter part



of the seventeenth century, and which resulted in the discovery of a luminous diamond. This tale it was which had come into Tom's head as he listened to honest Dick Wharton's ghost-story; while the means which he had adopted to verify his supposition sprang from his own fertile Irish brain.

"We'll take it down to Cape Town," continued Tom, "and if we can't dispose of it with advantage there, it will be worth our while to ship for London with it. Let us go along to Madison's first, though; he knows something of these things, and can perhaps give us some idea of what we may consider a fair price for our treasure."

We turned off from the track accordingly, before reaching our hut, and kept along the narrow path leading to Madison's farm. He was at lunch when we entered; and in a minute we were seated at each side of him, enjoying South African hospitality.

"Well," he said, after the servants were gone, "what's in the wind now? I see you have something to say to me. What is it?"

Tom produced his packet, and solemnly untied the handkerchiefs which enveloped it. "There!" he said, putting his crystal on the table; "what would you say was a fair price for that?"



Madison took it up and examined it critically. "Well," he said, laying it down again, "in its crude state about twelve shillings per ton."

"Twelve shillings!" cried Tom, starting to his feet. "Don't you see what it is?"

"Rock-salt!"

"Rock-salt be d—d! a diamond."

"Taste it!" said Madison.

Tom put it to his lips, dashed it down with a dreadful exclamation, and rushed out of the room.

I felt sad and disappointed enough myself; but presently remembering what Tom had said about the pistol, I, too, left the house, and made for the hut, leaving, Madison open-mouthed with astonishment. When I got in, I found Tom lying in his bunk with his face to the wall, too dispirited apparently to answer my consolations. Anathematizing Dick and Madison, the Sasassa demon, and everything else, I strolled out of the hut, and refreshed myself with a pipe after our wearisome adventure. I was about fifty yards from the hut, when I heard issuing from it the sound which of all others I least expected to hear. Had it been a groan or an oath, I should have taken it as a matter of course; but the sound which caused me to stop and take the pipe out of my mouth was a hearty roar of laughter! Next moment, Tom



himself emerged from the door, his whole face radiant with delight. "Game for another ten-mile walk, old fellow?"

"What! for another lump of rock-salt, at twelve shillings a ton?"

"'No more of that, Hal, an you love me,'" grinned Tom. "Now look here, Jack. What blessed fools we are to be so floored by a trifle! Just sit on this stump for five minutes, and I'll make it as clear as daylight. You've seen many a lump of rock-salt stuck in a crag, and so have I, though we did make such a mull of this one. Now, Jack, did any of the pieces you have ever seen shine in the darkness brighter than any fire-fly?"

"Well, I can't say they ever did."

"I'd venture to prophesy that if we waited until night, which we won't do, we would see that light still glimmering among the rocks. Therefore, Jack, when we took away this worthless salt, we took the wrong crystal. It is no very strange thing in these hills that a piece of rock-salt should be lying within a foot of a diamond. It caught her eyes, and we were excited, and so we made fools of ourselves, and *left the real stone behind*. Depend upon it, Jack, the Sasassa gem is lying within that magic circle of chalk upon the face of yonder cliff. Come, old fellow, light your pipe and stow your revolver, and we'll be off



before that fellow Madison has time to put two and two together."

I don't know that I was very sanguine this time. I had begun in fact to look upon the diamond as a most unmitigated nuisance. However, rather than throw a damper on Tom's expectations, I announced myself eager to start. What a walk it was! Tom was always a good mountaineer, but his excitement seemed to lend him wings that day, while I scrambled along after him as best I could. When we got within half a mile he broke into the "double," and never pulled up until he reached the round white circle upon the cliff. Poor old Tom! when I came up, his mood had changed, and he was standing with his hands in his pockets, gazing vacantly before him with a rueful countenance.

"Look!" he said—"look!" and he pointed at the cliff. Not a sign of anything in the least resembling a diamond there. The circle included nothing but flat slate-coloured stone, with one large hole, where we had extracted the rock-salt, and one or two smaller depressions. No sign of the gem.

"I've been over every inch of it," said poor Tom. "It's not there. Some one has been here and noticed the chalk, and taken it. Come home, Jack; I feel sick and tired. Oh! had any man ever luck like mine!"



I turned to go, but took one last look at the cliff first. Tom was already ten paces off.

"Hollo!" I cried, "don't you see any change in that circle since yesterday?"

"What d'ye mean?" said Tom.

"Don't you miss a thing that was there before?"

"The rock-salt?" said Tom.

"No; but the little round knob that we used for a fulcrum. I suppose we must have wrenched it off in using the lever. Let's have a look at what it's made of."

Accordingly, at the foot of the cliff we searched about among the loose stones.

"Here you are, Jack! We've done it at last! We're made men!"

I turned round, and there was Tom radiant with delight, and with a little corner of black rock in his hand. At first sight it seemed to be merely a chip from the cliff; but near the base there was projecting from it an object which Tom was now exultingly pointing out. It looked at first something like a glass eye; but there was a depth and brilliancy about it such as glass never exhibited. There was no mistake this time; we had certainly got possession of a jewel of great value; and with light hearts we turned from the valley, bearing away with us the "fiend" which had so long reigned there.



There, sir; I've spun my story out too long, and tired you perhaps. You see when I get talking of those rough old days, I kind of see the little cabin again, and the brook beside it, and the bush around, and seem to hear Tom's honest voice once more. There's little for me to say now. We prospered on the gem. Tom Donahue, as you know, has set up here, and is well known about town. I have done well, farming and ostrich-raising in Africa. We set old Dick Wharton up in business, and he is one of our nearest neighbours. If you should ever be coming up our way, sir, you'll not forget to ask for Jack Turnbull—Jack Turnbull of Sasassa Farm.





## HOW BROWN AWOKE AT THE RIGHT MOMENT.

THEY had all been a week in the jungle without catching a glimpse of a "fur-jacket," and but for the novelty and the high festival for which the occasion formed an excuse, they were beginning to get rather disgusted with their expedition. They thought sadly of what Smith and his party would be saying when they, the Smith party, returned triumphant to their bungalows with, perhaps, three or four tiger-skins, not to speak of other game, while here they had only accounted for a sambur deer and a few wretched antelopes.

While matters were at this stage, Brown, who loved adventure better than sleep, and seemed impervious to tropical suns, shouldered his gun one afternoon while all the rest of the camp were still steeped in after-breakfast oblivion, and hied out through the jungle for a shot at whatever chance might throw in his way. He hoped at least to come



across a jungle fowl or two, or perhaps a pea-fowl, to replenish their somewhat empty game-bag; and if bigger game did offer—why, he trusted to his luck and his good breech-loader to make the best of the situation.

The spreading foliage overhead with its flickering shade sheltered him from the direct blaze of the sun, which it largely absorbed; and through the cool shadow below he wound over a thick carpet of dead leaves, between clumps of interlacing creepers and trailers, long thorny canes with terrible hook-shaped prickles and dense masses of leafage; and between the huge trunks of *sâl*, *ceesoo*, *toon*, and other trees, which here, for hundreds of miles east and west, initiated the slopes of the mighty Himalayas. Not a breath of air stirred, enough even to agitate the smoke of his cheroot as it curled straight upwards; nor did a sound break the intense stillness of the forest depths. Here it seemed as if the foot of man had never intruded to disturb Nature's primeval garb, or ever essayed the task of cutting down and transferring to the distant haunts of men these huge trunks. All seemed in its wild and natural luxuriance as from time immemorial. Every now and again rare creepers all ablaze with flowers that had wound themselves in thick leafy masses round the trunks of trees arrested Brown's attention, or parasite orchids



of brilliant hues that embedded their roots in them. Brown was a keen admirer of nature, and alone as he was communing with her, he felt the quiet, deep spirit of forest life stealing over him—that strange, indescribable feeling which Cooper and Mayne Reid have so well described as wedding the great prairie hunters of the West to their woodland life. Now and again a rustle among the branches caused Brown to look up, and a brilliant jungle-fowl in all his glorious plumage flashed across the sunlight, but too quick for him to take aim. Still, by gauging their flight through the supervening foliage he managed by and by to drop one or two. Nothing of a larger kind offered, however, and he was bethinking himself of returning to camp, from which he must now have strolled a considerable distance, when a slight rustle among the undergrowth suddenly arrested his attention. It was nothing but an antelope that trotted out and cantered slowly away as if quite unused as yet to that novel creature, man, that had invaded its solitude. A ruthless bullet, however, soon undeceived and rolled it over, but for a moment only, for up it started again and limped away at a feeble, laboured pace. Brown gave chase, thinking it would soon drop, but still it kept its distance, till, managing to reload as he ran, a charge of No. 2 brought it down.



He had now got his antelope, but what was his consternation on looking round to find that not only was the sun by this time very low down, but that he had lost his bearings! Another half-hour or so in the tropics would bring total darkness, and here he was in the midst of the jungle, he knew not whither or how far from camp. He only hoped he was not too far for the reports of his friends' barrels to reach him and direct him towards them, or *vice versâ*. Without such a guide the more he attempted to reach the camp, the more he might be wandering away from it. Acting on this idea, he fired off shot after shot, listening intently in the intervals for the wished-for response, but not a sound replied to his signals. Things were beginning to look serious. The dusk was already deepening into darkness, the mosquitoes beginning to buzz, and fire-flies to glance through the foliage. There was no chance now of his friends coming out in search of him, on a wild-goose chase at the best, and that, too, in the lawful prowling hour of the four-footed denizens of the forest. Though not one of them might be visible by day, yet Brown knew well that there might be plenty of them in every direction at night, and therefore for him to attempt a solitary journey to camp would be still more dangerous. So there seemed nothing left but to bivouac where he was for the night and make the



most of the situation. Accordingly he set about his preparations without more delay.

First he looked about for a tree that would afford a safe and comfortable perch. This he soon found in one where several large arms branched off from the main trunk at an elevation of about fifteen feet from the ground, and which promised a comfortable roost at the fork or point of juncture. Before ascending, however, he was resolved not to leave behind his birds and antelope as a tasty morsel to any stray tiger or leopard that came prowling about, so he tied one cord to the birds and another to the antelope and the other end of each to his button-hole, and thus accoutred began to ascend the tree. This he managed slowly and with some difficulty, owing to the darkness and smoothness of the trunk, and to his attention being every now and then distracted by imaginary rustling below, but with the help of his hunting-knife and sundry excrescences on the bark, at length he stood upon the branches with a triumphant feeling of being, in a manner, secure and housed for the night. He only hoped some gliding boa might not come upon him unawares and entwine him in its gentle embrace! But beyond that it would puzzle, thought he, even the feline powers of the leopard to reach him in his aerial bedchamber. He now pulled up his birds, and hitching the other cord over a



branch of the tree, he soon had his antelope also landed beside him. Nothing remained now but to load and put within easy reach his double-barrelled friend, and to attach himself to the tree as a necessary precaution against sleep. Having done all this he lit his cheroot. Soon the red glow and the soothing fumes helped to dissipate the last traces of vexation at his position, and to throw him into dreamy philosophizings which seemed the precursor to sleep. The forest sounds which night had awakened far and near now fell upon his ear, as if the authors were abundant all around, despite their quietude by day. He recognized the deep-throated roar of the king of the forest, the shallower half-snarl, half-howl of the leopard, and the bark of the wolf. An interlude occasionally broke in upon those in the trumpeting of an elephant or the grunt of a rhinoceros—those huge and harmless animals gradually becoming extinct through the wanton assaults of man. At times some of the roarings came very near indeed, and more than once Brown thought he could detect a cat-like movement over the leafy carpet below, but this gave him little concern. Gradually the sounds grew fainter and fainter and further off, till they ceased altogether. Brown was asleep!

How long he had slept he knew not, when a strange, undefinable impression of something wrong



caused him suddenly to open his eyes and stare straight before him. There, shining through the foliage and seemingly close to him, appeared two stars of intense brilliancy and richness, the only gleams amid the pitchy darkness. He could not remove his eyes from them but kept staring as if magnetized. Presently he thought there was a slight swaying or slow movement of the stars, and hardly feeling as if he were yet awake, and with the impression of being under some strange fascination, he tried to rouse himself, never moving, however, nor yet once lifting his eyes off those glittering lights. Gradually, as reflection grew clearer, the truth dawned upon him with almost overwhelming force! There was no doubt he was under the blaze of a hungry tiger's eyes, the owner of which was apparently gauging his bearings before proceeding to business. The discovery almost petrified him for a moment, but only for a moment, and then all his coolness returned with redoubled force. Everything depended on his self-possession. His only chance of life, he felt, lay in making himself master of the situation, and this he was resolved to be. Without moving a muscle, without flinching or faltering, steadily he returned the fierce glare that was fixed upon him. In this stare was concentrated the power of the human mind over the brute. He felt this power and knew its



efficacy from the experience of many previous occasions. Seconds and minutes passed and still the two continued thus motionless, staring at each other. As each minute passed, Brown felt more and more that this monster that could have torn him to pieces with ease was yet powerless to touch him so long as he kept him under the check of his eye. The least wavering on his part he knew would at once be detected by the terrible *vis-à-vis*, and signal his fate. The idea of seizing his gun had never entered his mind. Before he could half reach for it the animal would have been upon him. By and by, as Brown's eyes got accustomed to the darkness, he could discern, crouched on the very branch on which he lay, the outline of the tiger dimly visible only some three yards off. The time that now passed was intensified into a length that seemed interminable to Brown; but still there was no movement of the enemy. At length the glaring eyeballs, he thought, drew nearer to each other, then one gradually was lost to sight, and soon after the other. Then a stealthy cat-like movement and heaving of the strong branch as of some animal retreating along it, till presently a soft plunge and rebound of the branch indicated its having quitted its position. It was not the sound of a leap to the ground, however, but rather of springing from one branch to another, and Brown did not yet feel



quite secure, though at the same time thoroughly mystified to account for the movements of his enemy. Not less puzzled was he to understand how the animal could possibly have reached him in a place that seemed inaccessible to a tiger, and where he had thought himself perfectly secure.

Presently he heard a dull thud, announcing that the brute had reached the ground, and Brown at length drew a long breath of relief. He felt that his foe was fairly gone, routed from the field; and this without a single active effort on his part! The tension of those last few minutes left a strain from which it took Brown some time to recover, then his first action, needless to say, was to get in hand his "trusty friend," to be better prepared against any fresh emergency.

Insecure though his quarters were now proved to be, he had no alternative but to continue there for the rest of the night. To descend and attempt to search for others would be the more hazardous of the two, with such neighbours about, and besides an almost impossible task in the darkness. He resolved, therefore, to keep awake for the rest of the night and a cat's look-out for contingencies. The blood-track of the antelope had, no doubt, he thought, led to his being discovered, though possibly it was more in quest of the antelope than of himself that the



tiger had scaled the tree. How he had done so, still remained a puzzle. Brown did not close an eye again that night, which seemed interminable, and took him half a dozen more Havannahs without getting him through it, but happily he had no more deadly visitants than the mosquitoes. At length a pale, purple glow through the foliage indicated approaching day, and soon thereafter Brown descended from his perch, with stiffened limbs but with a keen appetite for "chota hazri" (early breakfast), despite his night's experiences. He now found out what had so puzzled him about the tiger's ascent—namely, that the branch on which he was resting almost touched mid-way another huge semi-broken branch of a neighbouring tree that was bent down to the ground, and thus afforded easy access to the animal.

Shouldering now his antelope and birds, Brown lost no time in making tracks for camp as best he could guess. He kept firing off a shot at intervals to apprise his friends of his whereabouts, and at length a faint answering report reached his ears, sufficient to guide him on in the right direction and relieve his mind of all anxiety. Soon thereafter he was hailed by his friends amid a perfect shower of ejaculations; all the answer they got was a wail of hunger and a cry for "chota hazri," after which Brown promised to relate his adventures faithfully



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and truly. Over a cup of steaming "mocha," hot toast, cold fowl, and eggs, Brown recounted his experiences of the night and the hair-breadth chance on which his life had hung of *waking at the right moment*. How he had done so he could only regard as providential. Two days later the skin of his tiger visitant adorned the front of the camp spread out in the sun to dry. The antelope that had attracted the brute to Brown's roost, served as a bait to lure him a second time to the tree, where he now fell a victim to the rifles of Brown and his friends who were ensconced above; and where Brown had the pleasure of passing a second night in his old quarters, though now in company with his friends, and after they had secured themselves against the dangerous access by the branch.



## THE CAPTAIN OF THE 'POLE-STAR.'\*

[Being an extract from the Journal of JOHN MCALISTER RAY, student of medicine, kept by him during the six months voyage in the Arctic Seas, of the steam-whaler *Pole-star*, of Dundee, Captain Nicholas Craigie.]

*September 11th.* Lat.  $81^{\circ} 40'$  N.; Long.  $2^{\circ}$  E.—Still lying-to amid enormous ice fields. The one which stretches away to the north of us, and to which our ice-anchor is attached, cannot be smaller than an English county. To the right and left unbroken sheets extend to the horizon. This morning the mate reported that there were signs of pack ice to the southward. Should this form of sufficient thickness to bar our return, we shall be in a position of danger, as the food, I hear, is already running somewhat short. It is late in the season and the nights are beginning to reappear. This morning I saw a star twinkling just over the fore-yard—the first since the beginning of May. There is

\* Originally published in 'Temple Bar.'



considerable discontent among the crew, many of whom are anxious to get back home to be in time for the herring season, when labour always commands a high price upon the Scotch coast. As yet their displeasure is only signified by sullen countenances and black looks, but I heard from the second mate this afternoon that they contemplated sending a deputation to the Captain to explain their grievance. I much doubt how he will receive it, as he is a man of fierce temper, and very sensitive about anything approaching to an infringement of his rights. I shall venture after dinner to say a few words to him upon the subject. I have always found that he will tolerate from me what he would resent from any other member of the crew. Amsterdam Island, at the north-west corner of Spitzbergen, is visible upon our starboard quarter—a rugged line of volcanic rocks, intersected by white seams, which represent glaciers. It is curious to think that at the present moment there is probably no human being nearer to us than the Danish settlements in the south of Greenland—a good nine hundred miles as the crow flies. A captain takes a great responsibility upon himself when he risks his vessel under such circumstances. No whaler has ever remained in these latitudes till so advanced a period of the year.

9 P.M.—I have spoken to Captain Craigie, and



though the result has been hardly satisfactory, I am bound to say that he listened to what I had to say very quietly and even deferentially. When I had finished he put on that air of iron determination which I have frequently observed upon his face, and paced rapidly backwards and forwards across the narrow cabin for some minutes. At first I feared that I had seriously offended him, but he dispelled the idea by sitting down again, and putting his hand upon my arm with a gesture which almost amounted to a caress. There was a depth of tenderness too in his wild dark eyes which surprised me considerably. "Look here, Doctor," he said, "I'm sorry I ever took you—I am indeed—and I would give fifty pounds this minute to see you standing safe upon the Dundee quay. It's hit or miss with me this time. There are fish to the north of us. How dare you shake your head, sir, when I tell you I saw them blowing from the masthead!"—this in a sudden burst of fury, though I was not conscious of having shown any signs of doubt. "Two and twenty fish in as many minutes as I am a living man, and not one under ten foot.\* Now, Doctor, do you think I can leave the country when there is only one infernal strip of ice between me and my

\* A whale is measured among whalers not by length of its body, but by the length of its whalebone.



fortune. If it came on to blow from the north to-morrow we could fill the ship and be away before the frost could catch us. If it came on to blow from the south—well, I suppose, the men are paid for risking their lives, and as for myself it matters but little to me, for I have more to bind me to the other world than to this one. I confess that I am sorry for *you*, though. I wish I had old Angus Tait, who was with me last voyage, for he was a man that would never be missed, and you—you said once that you were engaged, did you not?"

"Yes," I answered, snapping the spring of the locket which hung from my watch chain, and holding up the little vignette of Flora.

"Blast you!" he yelled, springing out of his seat, with his very beard bristling with passion. "What is your happiness to me? What have I to do with her that you must dangle her photograph before my eyes?" I almost thought that he was about to strike me in the frenzy of his rage, but with another imprecation he dashed open the door of the cabin and rushed out upon deck, leaving me considerably astonished at his extraordinary violence. It is the first time that he has ever shown me anything but courtesy and kindness. I can hear him pacing excitedly up and down overhead as I write these lines.

I should like to give a sketch of the character of

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this man, but it seems presumptuous to attempt such a thing upon paper, when the idea in my own mind is at best a vague and uncertain one. Several times I have thought that I grasped the clue which might explain it, but only to be disappointed by his presenting himself in some new light which would upset all my conclusions. It may be that no human eye but my own shall ever rest upon these lines, yet as a psychological study I shall attempt to leave some record of Captain Nicholas Craigie.

A man's outer case generally gives some indication of the soul within. The Captain is tall and well-formed, with dark, handsome face, and a curious way of twitching his limbs, which may arise from nervousness, or be simply an outcome of his excessive energy. His jaw and whole cast of countenance is manly and resolute, but the eyes are the distinctive feature of his face. They are of the very darkest hazel, bright and eager, with a singular mixture of recklessness in their expression, and of something else which I have sometimes thought was more allied with horror than any other emotion. Generally the former predominated, but on occasions, and more particularly when he was thoughtfully inclined, the look of fear would spread and deepen until it imparted a new character to his whole countenance. It is at these times that he is most



subject to tempestuous fits of anger, and he seems to be aware of it, for I have known him lock himself up so that no one might approach him until his dark hour was passed. He sleeps badly, and I have heard him shouting during the night, but his room is some little distance from mine, and I could never distinguish the words which he said.

This is one phase of his character, and the most disagreeable one. It is only through my close association with him, thrown together as we are day after day, that I have observed it. Otherwise he is an agreeable companion, well-read and entertaining, and as gallant a seaman as ever trod a deck. I shall not easily forget the way in which he handled the ship when we were caught by a gale among the loose ice at the beginning of April. I have never seen him so cheerful, and even hilarious, as he was that night as he paced backwards and forwards upon the bridge amid the flashing of the lightning and the howling of the wind. He has told me several times that the thought of death was a pleasant one to him, which is a sad thing for a young man to say; he cannot be much more than thirty, though his hair and moustache are already slightly grizzled. Some great sorrow must have overtaken him and blighted his whole life. Perhaps I should be the same if I lost my Flora—God



knows! I think if it were not for her that I should care very little whether the wind blew from the north or the south to-morrow. There, I hear him come down the companion and he has locked himself up in his room, which shows that he is still in an amiable mood. And so to bed, as old Pepys would say, for the candle is burning down (we have to use them now since the nights are closing in), and the steward has turned in, so there are no hopes of another one.

*September 12th.*—Calm clear day, and still lying in the same position. What wind there is comes from the south-east, but it is very slight. Captain is in a better humour, and apologized to me at breakfast for his rudeness. He still looks somewhat distraught, however, and retains that wild look in his eyes which in a Highlander would mean that he was "fey"—at least so our chief engineer remarked to me, and he has some reputation among the Celtic portion of our crew as a seer and expounder of omens.

It is strange that superstition should have obtained such mastery over this hard-headed and practical race. I could not have believed to what an extent it is carried had I not observed it for myself. We have had a perfect epidemic of it this voyage, until I have felt inclined to serve out rations of sedatives and nerve tonics with the Saturday allowance of



grog. The first symptom of it was, that shortly after leaving Shetland the men at the wheel used to complain that they heard plaintive cries and screams in the wake of the ship, as if something were following it and were unable to overtake it. This fiction has been kept up during the whole voyage, and on dark nights at the beginning of the seal-fishing it was only with great difficulty that men could be induced to do their spell. No doubt what they heard was either the creaking of the rudder-chains, or the cry of some passing sea-bird. I have been fetched out of bed several times to listen to it, but I need hardly say that I was never able to distinguish anything unnatural. The men, however, are so absurdly positive upon the subject that it is hopeless to argue with them. I mentioned the matter to the Captain once, but to my surprise he took it very gravely, and indeed appeared to be considerably disturbed by what I told him. I should have thought that he at least would have been above such vulgar delusions.

All this disquisition upon superstition leads me up to the fact that Mr. Manson, our second mate, saw a ghost last night—or, at least, says that he did, which of course is the same thing. It is quite refreshing to have some new topic of conversation after the eternal routine of bears and whales which



has served us for so many months. Manson swears the ship is haunted, and that he would not stay in her a day if he had any other place to go to. Indeed the fellow is honestly frightened, and I had to give him some chloral and bromide of potassium this morning to steady him down. He seemed quite indignant when I suggested that he had been having an extra glass the night before, and I was obliged to pacify him by keeping as grave a countenance as possible during his story, which he certainly narrated in a very straightforward and matter-of-fact way.

"I was on the bridge," he said, "about four bells in the middle watch, just when the night was at its darkest. There was a bit of a moon, but the clouds were blowing across it so that you couldn't see far from the ship. John McLeod, the harpooner, came aft from the foc'sle-head and reported a strange noise on the starboard bow. I went forrard and we both heard it, sometimes like a bairn crying and sometimes like a wench in pain. I've been seventeen years to the country and I never heard seal, old or young, make a sound like that. As we were standing there on the foc'sle-head the moon came out from behind a cloud, and we both saw a sort of white figure moving across the ice field in the same direction that we had heard the cries. We lost sight of it for a while, but it came back on the port bow, and



we could just make it out like a shadow on the ice. I sent a hand aft for the rifles, and McLeod and I went down on to the pack, thinking that maybe it might be a bear. When we got on the ice I lost sight of McLeod, but I pushed on in the direction where I could still hear the cries. I followed them for a mile or maybe more, and then running round a hummock I came right on to the top of it standing and waiting for me seemingly. I don't know what it was. It wasn't a bear anyway. It was tall and white and straight, and if it wasn't a man or a woman, I'll stake my davy it was something worse. I made for the ship as hard as I could run, and precious glad I was to find myself aboard. I signed articles to do my duty by the ship, and on the ship I'll stay, but you don't catch me on the ice again after sundown."

That is his story given as far as I can in his own words. I fancy what he saw must, in spite of his denial, have been a young bear erect upon its hind legs, an attitude which they often assume when alarmed. In the uncertain light this would bear a resemblance to a human figure, especially to a man whose nerves were already somewhat shaken. Whatever it may have been, the occurrence is unfortunate, for it has produced a most unpleasant effect upon the crew. Their looks are more sullen than



before and their discontent more open. The double grievance of being debarred from the herring fishing and of being detained in what they choose to call a haunted vessel, may lead them to do something rash. Even the harpooners, who are the oldest and steadiest among them, are joining in the general agitation.

Apart from this absurd outbreak of superstition, things are looking rather more cheerful. The pack which was forming to the south of us has partly cleared away, and the water is so warm as to lead me to believe that we are lying in one of those branches of the gulf-stream which run up between Greenland and Spitzbergen. There are numerous small Medusæ and sealemons about the ship, with abundance of shrimps, so that there is every possibility of "fish" being sighted. Indeed one was seen blowing about dinner-time, but in such a position that it was impossible for the boats to follow it.

*September 13th.*—Had an interesting conversation with the chief mate, Mr. Milne, upon the bridge. It seems that our Captain is as great an enigma to the seaman, and even to the owners of the vessel, as he has been to me. Mr. Milne tells me that when the ship is paid off, upon returning from a voyage, Captain Craigie disappears, and is not seen again until the approach of another season, when he walks quietly into the office of the company, and



asks whether his services will be required. He has no friend in Dundee, nor does any one pretend to be acquainted with his early history. His position depends entirely upon his skill as a seaman, and the name for courage and coolness which he had earned in the capacity of mate, before being entrusted with a separate command. The unanimous opinion seems to be that he is not a Scotchman, and that his name is an assumed one. Mr. Milne thinks that he has devoted himself to whaling simply for the reason that it is the most dangerous occupation which he could select, and that he courts death in every possible manner. He mentioned several instances of this, one of which is rather curious, if true. It seems that on one occasion he did not put in an appearance at the office, and a substitute had to be selected in his place. That was at the time of the last Russian and Turkish war. When he turned up again next spring he had a puckered wound in the side of his neck, which he used to endeavour to conceal with his cravat. Whether the mate's inference that he had been engaged in the war is true or not I cannot say. It was certainly a strange coincidence.

The wind is veering round in an easterly direction, but is still very slight. I think the ice is lying closer than it did yesterday. As far as the eye can



reach on every side there is one wide expanse of spotless white, only broken by an occasional rift or the dark shadow of a hummock. To the south there is the narrow lane of blue water which is our sole means of escape, and which is closing up every day. The Captain is taking a heavy responsibility upon himself. I hear that the tank of potatoes has been finished, and even the biscuits are running short, but he preserves the same impassible countenance and spends the greater part of the day at the crow's nest, sweeping the horizon with his glass. His manner is very variable, and he seems to avoid my society, but there has been no repetition of the violence which he showed the other night.

7.30 P.M.—My deliberate opinion is, that we are commanded by a madman. Nothing else can account for the extraordinary vagaries of Captain Craigie. It is fortunate that I have kept this journal of our voyage, as it will serve to justify us in case we have to put him under any sort of restraint—a step which I should only consent to as a last resource. Curiously enough, it was he himself who suggested lunacy and not mere eccentricity as the secret of his strange conduct. He was standing upon the bridge about an hour ago, peering as usual through his glass, while I was walking up and down the quarterdeck. The majority of the men



were below at their tea, for the watches have not been regularly kept of late. Tired of walking, I leaned against the bulwarks, and admired the mellow glow cast by the sinking sun upon the great ice fields which surround us. I was suddenly aroused from the reverie into which I had fallen by a hoarse voice at my elbow, and starting round I found that the Captain had descended and was standing by my side. He was starting out over the ice with an expression in which horror, surprise, and something approaching to joy were contending for the mastery. In spite of the cold, great drops of perspiration were coursing down his forehead and he was evidently fearfully excited. His limbs twitched like those of a man upon the verge of an epileptic fit, and the lines about his mouth were drawn and hard.

“Look!” he gasped, seizing me by the wrist, but still keeping his eyes upon the distant ice, and moving his head slowly in a horizontal direction, as if following some object which was moving across the field of vision. “Look! There, man, there! Between the hummocks! Now coming out from behind the far one! You see her, you *must* see her! There still! Flying from me, by God, flying from me—and gone!”

He uttered the last two words in a whisper of concentrated agony which shall never fade from my



remembrance. Clinging to the ratlines he endeavoured to climb up upon the top of the bulwarks, as if in the hope of obtaining a last glance at the departing object. His strength was not equal to the attempt, however, and he staggered back against the saloon skylights, where he leaned panting and exhausted. His face was so livid that I expected him to become unconscious, so lost no time in leading him down the companion, and stretching him upon one of the sofas in the cabin. I then poured him out some brandy which I held to his lips, and which had a wonderful effect upon him, bringing the blood back into his white face and steadying his poor shaking limbs. He raised himself up upon his elbow, and looking round to see that we were alone, he beckoned to me to come and sit beside him.

"You saw it, didn't you?" he asked, still in the same subdued awesome tone so foreign to the nature of the man.

"No, I saw nothing."

His head sank back upon the cushions. "No, he wouldn't without the glass," he murmured. "He couldn't. It was the glass that showed her to me, and then the eyes of love—the eyes of love. I say, Doc, don't let the steward in! He'll think I'm mad. Just bolt the door, will you!"

I rose and did what he had commanded.



He lay quiet for a little, lost in thought apparently, and then raised himself up upon his elbow again, and asked for some more brandy.

"You don't think I am, do you, Doc?" he asked as I was putting the bottle back into the after-locker. "Tell me now, as man to man, do you think that I am mad?"

"I think you have something on your mind," I answered, "which is exciting you and doing you a good deal of harm."

"Right there, lad!" he cried, his eyes sparkling from the effects of the brandy. "Plenty on my mind—plenty! But I can work out the latitude and the longitude, and I can handle my sextant and manage my logarithms. You couldn't prove me mad in a court of law, could you, now?" It was curious to hear the man lying back and coolly arguing out the question of his own sanity.

"Perhaps not," I said, "but still I think you would be wise to get home as soon as you can and settle down to a quiet life for a while."

"Get home, eh?" he muttered with a sneer upon his face. "One word for me and two for yourself, lad. Settle down with Flora—pretty little Flora. Are bad dreams signs of madness?"

"Sometimes," I answered.

"What else? what would be the first symptoms?"



"Pains in the head, noises in the ears, flashes before the eyes, delusions——"

"Ah! what about them?" he interrupted. "What would you call a delusion?"

"Seeing a thing which is not there is a delusion."

"But she *was* there!" he groaned to himself. "She *was* there!" and rising, he unbolted the door and walked with slow and uncertain steps to his own cabin, where I have no doubt that he will remain until to-morrow morning. His system seems to have received a terrible shock, whatever it may have been that he imagined himself to have seen. The man becomes a greater mystery every day, though I fear that the solution which he has himself suggested is the correct one, and that his reason is affected. I do not think that a guilty conscience has anything to do with his behaviour. The idea is a popular one among the officers, and, I believe the crew; but I have seen nothing to support it. He has not the air of a guilty man, but of one who has had terrible usage at the hands of fortune, and who should be regarded as a martyr rather than a criminal.

The wind is veering round to the south to-night. God help us if it blocks that narrow pass which is our only road to safety! Situated as we are on the edge of the main Arctic pack, or the "barrier" as



it is called by the whalers, any wind from the north has the effect of shredding out the ice around us and allowing our escape, while a wind from the south blows up all the loose ice behind us and hems us in between two packs. God help us, I say again!

*September 14th.*—Sunday, and a day of rest. My fears have been confirmed, and the thin strip of blue water has disappeared from the southward. Nothing but the great motionless ice fields around us, with their weird hummocks and fantastic pinnacles. There is a deathly silence over their wide expanse which is horrible. No lapping of the waves now, no cries of seagulls or straining of sails, but one deep universal silence in which the murmurs of the seamen, and the creak of their boots upon the white shining deck, seem discordant and out of place. Our only visitor was an Arctic fox, a rare animal upon the pack, though common enough upon the land. He did not come near the ship, however, but after surveying us from a distance fled rapidly across the ice. This was curious conduct, as they generally know nothing of man, and being of an inquisitive nature become so familiar that they are easily captured. Incredible as it may seem, even this little incident produced a bad effect upon the crew. “Yon puir beastie kens mair, ay an’ sees mair nor you nor



me!" was the comment of one of the leading harpooners, and the others nodded their acquiescence. It is vain to attempt to argue against such puerile superstition. They have made up their minds that there is a curse upon the ship, and nothing will ever persuade them to the contrary.

The Captain remained in seclusion all day except for about half an hour in the afternoon, when he came out upon the quarterdeck. I observed that he kept his eye fixed upon the spot where the vision of yesterday had appeared, and was quite prepared for another outburst, but none such came. He did not seem to see me although I was standing close beside him. Divine Service was read as usual by the chief engineer. It is a curious thing that in whaling vessels the Church of England Prayer-book is always employed, although there is never a member of that Church among either officers or crew. Our men are Roman Catholics or Presbyterians, the former predominating. Since a ritual is used which is foreign to both, neither can complain that the other is preferred to them, and they listen with all attention and devotion, so that the system has something to recommend it.

A glorious sunset, which made the great fields of ice look like a lake of blood. I have never seen a finer and at the same time more ghastly effect. Wind



is veering round. If it will blow twenty-four hours from the north all will yet be well.

*September 15th.*—To-day is Flora's birthday. Dear lass! it is well that she cannot see her boy, as she used to call me, shut up among the ice fields with a crazy captain and a few weeks' provisions. No doubt she scans the shipping list in the 'Scotsman' every morning to see if we are reported from Shetland. I have to set an example to the men and look cheery and unconcerned; but God knows, my heart is very heavy at times.

The thermometer is at nineteen Fahrenheit to-day. There is but little wind, and what there is comes from an unfavourable quarter. Captain is in an excellent humour; I think he imagines he has seen some other omen or vision, poor fellow, during the night, for he came into my room early in the morning, and stooping down over my bunk whispered, "It wasn't a delusion, Doc, it's all right!" After breakfast he asked me to find out how much food was left, which the second mate and I proceeded to do. It is even less than we had expected. Forward they have half a tank full of biscuits, three barrels of salt meat, and a very limited supply of coffee beans and sugar. In the after-hold and lockers there are a good many luxuries, such as tinned salmon, soups, haricot mutton, &c., but they will go a very short



way among a crew of fifty men. There are two barrels of flour in the store-room, and an unlimited supply of tobacco. Altogether there is about enough to keep the men on half rations for eighteen or twenty days—certainly not more. When we reported the state of things to the Captain, he ordered all hands to be piped, and addressed them from the quarterdeck. I never saw him to better advantage. With his tall, well-knit figure, and dark animated face, he seemed a man born to command, and he discussed the situation in a cool sailor-like way which showed that while appreciating the danger he had an eye for every loophole of escape.

“My lads,” he said, “no doubt you think I brought you into this fix, if it is a fix, and maybe some of you feel bitter against me on account of it. But you must remember that for many a season no ship that comes to the country has brought in as much oil-money as the old *Pole-star*, and every one of you has had his share of it. You can leave your wives behind you in comfort while other poor fellows come back to find their lasses on the parish. If you have to thank me for the one you have to thank me for the other, and we may call it quits. We’ve tried a bold venture before this and succeeded, so now that we’ve tried one and failed we’ve no cause to cry out about it. If the worst comes to the worst, we can



make the land across the ice, and lay in a stock of seals which will keep us alive until the spring. It won't come to that, though, for you'll see the Scotch coast again before three weeks are out. At present every man must go on half rations, share and share alike, and no favour to any. Keep up your hearts and you'll pull through this as you've pulled through many a danger before." These few simple words of his had a wonderful effect upon the crew. His former unpopularity was forgotten, and the old harpooner whom I have already mentioned for his superstition, led off three cheers, which were heartily joined in by all hands.

*September 16th.*—The wind has veered round to the north during the night, and the ice shows some symptoms of opening out. The men are in a good humour in spite of the short allowance upon which they have been placed. Steam is kept up in the engine-room, that there may be no delay should an opportunity for escape present itself. The Captain is in exuberant spirits, though he still retains that wild "fey" expression which I have already remarked upon. This lurst of cheerfulness puzzles me more than his former gloom. I cannot understand it. I think I mentioned in an early part of this journal that one of his oddities is that he never permits any person to enter his cabin, but he insists upon making



his own bed, such as it is, and performing every other office for himself. To my surprise he handed me the key to-day, and requested me to go down there and take the time by his chronometer, while he measured the altitude of the sun at noon. It is a bare little room containing a washing-stand and a few books, but little else in the way of luxury, except some pictures upon the walls. The majority of these are small cheap oleographs, but there was one water-colour sketch of the head of a young lady which arrested my attention. It was evidently a portrait, and not one of those fancy types of female beauty which sailors particularly affect. No artist could have evolved from his own mind such a curious mixture of character and weakness. The languid, dreamy eyes with their drooping lashes, and the broad, low brow unruffled by thought or care, were in strong contrast with the clean-cut, prominent jaw, and the resolute set of the lower lip. Underneath it in one of the corners was written "M. B., æt. 19." That any one in the short space of nineteen years of existence could develop such strength of will as was stamped upon her face seemed to me at the time to be well-nigh incredible. She must have been an extraordinary woman. Her features have thrown such a glamour over me that though I had but a fleeting glance at them, I could, were I a



draughtsman, reproduce them line for line upon this page of the journal. I wonder what part she has played in our Captain's life. He has hung her picture at the end of his berth so that his eyes continually rest upon it. Were he a less reserved man I should make some remark upon the subject. Of the other things in his cabin there was nothing worthy of mention—uniform coats, a camp stool, small looking-glass, tobacco box and numerous pipes, including an Oriental hookah—which by the bye gives some colour to Mr. Milne's story about his participation in the war, though the connection may seem rather a distant one.

11.20 P.M.—Captain just gone to bed after a long and interesting conversation on general topics. When he chooses he can be a most fascinating companion, being remarkably well read, and having the power of expressing his opinion forcibly without appearing to be dogmatic. I hate to have my intellectual toes trod upon. He spoke about the nature of the soul and sketched out the views of Aristotle and Plato upon the subject in a masterly manner. He seems to have a leaning for metempsychosis and the doctrines of Pythagoras. In discussing them we touched upon modern spiritualism, and I made some joking allusion to the impostures of Slade, upon which, to my surprise, he warned me most impressively against



confusing the innocent with the guilty, and argued that it would be as logical to brand Christianity as an error, because Judas who professed that religion was a villain. He shortly afterwards bade me good night and retired to his room.

The wind is freshening up, and blows steadily from the north. The nights are as dark now as they are in England. I hope to-morrow may set us free from our frozen fetters.

*September 17th.*—The Bogie again. Thank Heaven that I have strong nerves! The superstition of these poor fellows, and the circumstantial accounts which they give, with the utmost earnestness and self-conviction, would horrify any man not accustomed to their ways. There are many versions of the matter, but the sum-total of them all is that something uncanny has been flitting round the ship all night, and that Sandie McDonald of Peterhead and “lang” Peter Williamson of Shetland saw it, as also did Mr. Milne on the bridge—so having three witnesses, they can make a better case of it than the second mate did. I spoke to Milne after breakfast and told him that he should be above such nonsense, and that as an officer he ought to set the men a better example. He shook his weatherbeaten head ominously, but answered with characteristic caution, “Mebbe ay, mebbe na, Doctor,” he said; “I didna



ca' it a ghaist. I canna say I preen my faith in sea bogles an' the like, though there's a mony as claims to ha' seen a' that and waur. I'm no easy feared, but may be your ain bluid would run a bit cauld, mun, if instead o' speerin' aboot it in daylight ye were wi' me last night, an' seed an awfu' like shape, white an' gruesome, whiles here, whiles there, an' it greetin' and ca'ing in the darkness like a bit lambie that hae lost its mither. Ye would na' be sae ready to put it a' doon to auld wives' clavers then, I'm thinkin'." I saw it was hopeless to reason with him, so contented myself with begging him as a personal favour to call me up the next time the spectre appeared—a request to which he acceded with many ejaculations expressive of his hopes that such an opportunity might never arise.

As I had hoped, the white desert behind us has become broken by many thin streaks of water which intersect it in all directions. Our latitude to-day was  $80^{\circ} 52'$  N., which shows that there is a strong southerly drift upon the pack. Should the wind continue favourable it will break up as rapidly as it formed. At present we can do nothing but smoke and wait and hope for the best. I am rapidly becoming a fatalist. When dealing with such uncertain factors as wind and ice a man can be nothing else. Perhaps it was the wind and sand of the Arabian



deserts which gave the minds of the original followers of Mahomet their tendency to bow to kismet.

These spectral alarms have a very bad effect upon the Captain. I feared that it might excite his sensitive mind, and endeavoured to conceal the absurd story from him, but unfortunately he overheard one of the men making an allusion to it, and insisted upon being informed about it. As I had expected, it brought out all his latent lunacy in an exaggerated form. I can hardly believe that this is the same man who discoursed philosophy last night with the most critical acumen and coolest judgment. He is pacing backwards and forwards upon the quarterdeck like a caged tiger, stopping now and again to throw out his hands with a yearning gesture, and stare impatiently out over the ice. He keeps up a continual mutter to himself, and once he called out, "But a little time, love—but a little time!" Poor fellow, it is sad to see a gallant seaman and accomplished gentleman reduced to such a pass, and to think that imagination and delusion can cow a mind to which real danger was but the salt of life. Was ever a man in such a position as I, between a demented captain and a ghost-seeing mate? I sometimes think I am the only really sane man aboard the vessel—except perhaps the second engineer, who is a kind of ruminant and would care



nothing for all the fiends in the Red Sea, so long as they would leave him alone and not disarrange his tools.

The ice is still opening rapidly, and there is every probability of our being able to make a start to-morrow morning. They will think I am inventing when I tell them at home all the strange things that have befallen me.

12 P.M.—I have been a good deal startled, though I feel steadier now, thanks to a stiff glass of brandy. I am hardly myself yet however, as this handwriting will testify. The fact is that I have gone through a very strange experience, and am beginning to doubt whether I was justified in branding every one on board as madmen, because they professed to have seen things which did not seem reasonable to my understanding. Pshaw! I am a fool to let such a trifle unnerve me, and yet coming as it does after all these alarms, it has an additional significance, for I cannot doubt either Mr. Manson's story or that of the mate, now that I have experienced that which I used formerly to scoff at.

After all it was nothing very alarming—a mere sound, and that was all. I cannot expect that any one reading this, if any one ever should read it, will sympathize with my feelings, or realize the effect which it produced upon me at the time. Supper



was over, and I had gone on deck to have a quiet pipe before turning in. The night was very dark—so dark that standing under the quarter boat, I was unable to see the officer upon the bridge. I think I have already mentioned the extraordinary silence which prevails in these frozen seas. In other parts of the world, be they ever so barren, there is some light vibration of the air—some faint hum, be it from the distant haunts of men, or from the leaves of the trees, or the wings of the birds, or even the faint rustle of the grass that covers the ground. One may not actively perceive the sound, and yet if it were withdrawn it would be missed. It is only here in these Arctic seas that stark, unfathomable stillness obtrudes itself upon you in all its gruesome reality. You find your tympanum straining to catch some little murmur and dwelling eagerly upon every accidental sound within the vessel. In this state I was leaning against the bulwarks when there arose from the ice almost directly underneath me, a cry, sharp and shrill, upon the silent air of the night, beginning, as it seemed to me, at a note such as *prima donna* never reached, and mounting from that ever higher and higher until it culminated in a long wail of agony, which might have been the last cry of a lost soul. The ghastly scream is still wringing in my ears. Grief, unutterable grief, seemed to be expressed



in it and a great longing, and yet through it all there was an occasional wild note of exultation. It seemed to come from close beside me, and yet as I glared into the darkness I could make out nothing. I waited some little time, but without hearing any repetition of the sound, so I came below, more shaken than I have ever been in my life before. As I came down the companion I met Mr. Milne coming up to relieve the watch. "Weel, Doctor," he said, "may be that's auld wives' clavers tae? Did ye no hear it skirling? Maybe that's a superstition? what d'ye think o't noo?" I was obliged to apologize to the honest fellow, and acknowledge that I was as puzzled by it as he was. Perhaps tomorrow things may look different. At present I dare hardly write all that I think. Reading it again in days to come, when I have shaken off all these associations, I should despise myself for having been so weak.

*September 18th.*—Passed a restless and uneasy night still haunted by that strange sound. The Captain does not look as if he had had much repose either, for his face is haggard and his eyes bloodshot. I have not told him of my adventure of last night, nor shall I. He is already restless and excited, standing up, sitting down, and apparently utterly unable to keep still.



A fine lead appeared in the pack this morning, as I had expected, and we were able to cast off our ice-anchor, and steam about twelve miles in a west-sou'-westerly direction. We were then brought to a halt by a great floe as massive as any which we have left behind us. It bars our progress completely, so we can do nothing but anchor again and wait until it breaks up, which it will probably do within twenty-four hours, if the wind holds. Several bladder-nosed seals were seen swimming in the water, and one was shot, an immense creature more than eleven feet long. They are fierce, pugnacious animals, and are said to be more than a match for a bear. Fortunately they are slow and clumsy in their movements, so that there is little danger in attacking them upon the ice.

The Captain evidently does not think we have seen the last of our troubles, though why he should take a gloomy view of the situation is more than I can fathom, since every one else on board considers that we have had a miraculous escape, and are sure now to reach the open sea.

"I suppose you think it's all right now, Doctor?" he said as we sat together after dinner.

"I hope so," I answered.

"We mustn't be too sure—and yet no doubt you are right. We'll all be in the arms of



our own true loves before long, lad, won't we? But we mustn't be too sure—we mustn't be too sure."

He sat silent a little, swinging his leg thoughtfully backwards and forwards. "Look here," he continued. "It's a dangerous place this, even at its best—a treacherous, dangerous place. I have known men cut off very suddenly in a land like this. A slip would do it sometimes—a single slip, and down you go through a crack and only a bubble on the green water to show where it was that you sank. It's a queer thing," he continued with a nervous laugh, "but all the years I've been in this country I never once thought of making a will—not that I have anything to leave in particular, but still when a man is exposed to danger he should have everything arranged and ready—don't you think so?"

"Certainly," I answered, wondering what on earth he was driving at.

"He feels better for knowing it's all settled," he went on. "Now if anything should ever befall me, I hope that you will look after things for me. There is very little in the cabin, but such as it is I should like it to be sold, and the money divided in the same proportion as the oil-money among the crew. The chronometer I wish you to keep yourself as some slight remembrance of our voyage. Of course all this is a mere precaution, but I thought I would



take the opportunity of speaking to you about it. I suppose I might rely upon you if there were any necessity?"

"Most assuredly," I answered; "and since you are taking this step, I may as well——"

"You! you!" he interrupted. *You're* all right. What the devil is the matter with *you*? There, I didn't mean to be peppery, but I don't like to hear a young fellow, that has hardly began life, speculating about death. Go up on deck and get some fresh air into your lungs, instead of talking nonsense in the cabin, and encouraging me to do the same."

The more I think of this conversation of ours the less do I like it. Why should the man be settling his affairs at the very time when we seem to be emerging from all danger? There must be some method in his madness. Can it be that he contemplates suicide? I remember that upon one occasion he spoke in a deeply reverent manner of the heinousness of the crime of self-destruction. I shall keep my eye upon him, however, and though I cannot obtrude upon the privacy of his cabin, I shall at least make a point of remaining on deck as long as he stays up.

Mr. Milne pooh-poohs my fears, and says it is only the "skipper's little way." He himself takes a very rosy view of the situation. According to him



we shall be out of the ice by the day after to-morrow, pass Jan Meyen two days after that, and sight Shetland in little more than a week. I hope he may not be too sanguine. His opinion may be fairly balanced against the gloomy precautions of the Captain, for he is an old and experienced seaman, and weighs his words well before uttering them.

\* \* \* \* \*

The long impending catastrophe has come at last. I hardly know what to write about it. The Captain is gone. He may come back to us again alive, but I fear me—I fear me. It is now seven o'clock of the morning of the 19th of September. I have spent the whole night traversing the great ice-floe in front of us with a party of seamen in the hope of coming upon some trace of him, but in vain. I shall try to give some account of the circumstances which attended upon his disappearance. Should any one ever chance to read the words which I put down, I trust they will remember that I do not write from conjecture or from hearsay, but that I, a sane and educated man, am describing accurately what actually occurred before my very eyes. My inferences are my own, but I shall be answerable for the facts.

The Captain remained in excellent spirits after the conversation which I have recorded. He appeared to be nervous and impatient, however, frequently



changing his position, and moving his limbs in an aimless choreic way, which is characteristic of him at times. In a quarter of an hour he went upon deck seven times, only to descend after a few hurried paces. I followed him each time, for there was something about his face which confirmed my resolution of not letting him out of my sight. He seemed to observe the effect which his movements had produced, for he endeavoured by an over-done hilarity, laughing boisterously at the very smallest of jokes, to quiet my apprehensions.

After supper he went on to the poop once more, and I with him. The night was dark and very still, save for the melancholy souging of the wind among the spars. A thick cloud was coming up from the north-west, and the ragged tentacles which it threw out in front of it were drifting across the face of the moon, which only shone now and again through a rift in the wrack. The Captain paced rapidly backwards and forwards, and then seeing me still dogging him, he came across and hinted that he thought I should be better below—which I need hardly say had the effect of strengthening my resolution to remain on deck.

I think he forgot about my presence after this, for he stood silently leaning over the taffrail, and peering out across the great desert of snow, part of



which lay in shadow, while part glittered mistily in the moonlight. Several times I could see by his movements that he was referring to his watch, and once he muttered a short sentence of which I could only catch the one word "ready." I confess to having felt an eerie feeling creeping over me as I watched the loom of his tall figure through the darkness, and noticed how completely he fulfilled the idea of a man who is keeping a tryst. A tryst with whom? Some vague perception began to dawn upon me as I pieced one fact with another, but I was utterly unprepared for the sequel.

By the sudden intensity of his attitude I felt that he saw something. I crept up behind him. He was staring with an eager questioning gaze at what seemed to be a wreath of mist, blown swiftly in a line with the ship. It was a dim nebulous body devoid of shape, sometimes more, sometimes less apparent, as the light fell on it. The moon was dimmed in its brilliancy at the moment by a canopy of thinnest cloud, like the coating of an anemone.

"Coming, lass, coming," cried the skipper, in a voice of unfathomable tenderness and compassion, like one who soothes a beloved one by some favour long looked for, and as pleasant to bestow as to receive.

What followed, happened in an instant. I had



no power to interfere. He gave one spring to the top of the bulwarks, and another which took him on to the ice, almost to the feet of the pale misty figure. He held out his hands as if to clasp it, and so ran into the darkness with outstretched arms and loving words. I still stood rigid and motionless, straining my eyes after his retreating form, until his voice died away in the distance. I never thought to see him again, but at that moment the moon shone out brilliantly through a chink in the cloudy heaven, and illuminated the great field of ice. Then I saw his dark figure already a very long way off, running with prodigious speed across the frozen plain. That was the last glimpse which we caught of him—perhaps the last we ever shall. A party was organized to follow him, and I accompanied them, but the men's hearts were not in the work, and nothing was found. Another will be formed within a few hours. I can hardly believe I have not been dreaming, or suffering from some hideous nightmare, as I write these things down.

7.30 P.M.—Just returned dead beat and utterly tired out from a second unsuccessful search for the Captain. The floe is of enormous extent, for though we have traversed at least twenty miles of its surface, there has been no sign of its coming to an end. The frost has been so severe of late that the



overlying snow is frozen as hard as granite, otherwise we might have had the footsteps to guide us. The crew are anxious that we should cast off and steam round the floe and so to the southward, for the ice had broken up during the night, and the sea is visible upon the horizon. They argue that Captain Craigie is certainly dead, and that we are all risking our lives to no purpose by remaining when we have an opportunity of escape. Mr. Milne and I have had the greatest difficulty in persuading them to wait until to-morrow night, and have been compelled to promise that we will not under any circumstances delay our departure longer than that. We propose therefore to take a few hours' sleep and then to start upon a final search.

*September 20th, evening.*—I crossed the ice this morning with a party of men exploring the southern part of the floe, while Mr. Milne went off in a northerly direction. We pushed on for ten or twelve miles without seeing a trace of any living thing except a single bird, which fluttered a great way over our heads, and which by its flight I should judge to have been a falcon. The southern extremity of the ice field tapered away into a long narrow spit which projected out into the sea. When we came to the base of this promontory, the men halted, but I begged them to continue to the



extreme end of it that we might have the satisfaction of knowing that no possible chance had been neglected.

We had hardly gone a hundred yards before McDonald of Peterhead cried out that he saw something in front of us, and began to run. We all got a glimpse of it and ran too. At first it was only a vague darkness against the white ice, but as we raced along together it took the shape of a man, and eventually of the man of whom we were in search. He was lying face downwards upon a frozen bank. Many little crystals of ice and feathers of snow had drifted on to him as he lay, and sparkled upon his dark seaman's jacket. As we came up some wandering puff of wind caught these tiny flakes in its vortex, and they whirled up into the air, partially descended again, and then, caught once more in the current, sped rapidly away in the direction of the sea. To my eyes it seemed but a snow-drift, but many of my companions averred that it started up in the shape of a woman, stooped over the corpse and kissed it, and then hurried away across the floe. I have learned never to ridicule any man's opinion, however strange it may seem. Sure it is that Captain Nicholas Craigie had met with no painful end, for there was a bright smile upon his blue pinched features, and his hands were



still outstretched as though grasping at the strange visitor which had summoned him away into the dim world that lies beyond the grave.

We buried him the same afternoon with the ship's ensign around him, and a thirty-two pound shot at his feet. I read the burial service, while the rough sailors wept like children, for there were many who owed much to his kind heart, and who showed now the affection which his strange ways had repelled during his lifetime. He went off the grating with a dull, sullen splash, and as I looked into the green water I saw him go down, down, down until he was but a little flickering patch of white hanging upon the outskirts of eternal darkness. Then even that faded away and he was gone. There he shall lie, with his secret and his sorrows and his mystery all still buried in his breast, until that great day when the sea shall give up its dead, and Nicholas Craigie come out from among the ice with the smile upon his face, and his stiffened arms outstretched in greeting. I pray that his lot may be a happier one in that life than it has been in this.

I shall not continue my journal. Our road to home lies plain and clear before us, and the great ice field will soon be but a remembrance of the past. It will be some time before I get over the shock produced by recent events. When I began this



record of our voyage I little thought of how I should be compelled to finish it. I am writing these final words in the lonely cabin, still starting at times and fancying I hear the quick nervous step of the dead man upon the deck above me. I entered his cabin to-night as was my duty, to make a list of his effects in order that they might be entered in the official log. All was as it had been upon my previous visit, save that the picture which I have described as having hung at the end of his bed had been cut out of its frame, as with a knife, and was gone. With this last link in a strange chain of evidence I close my diary of the voyage of the *Pole-star*.

[NOTE by Dr. John McAlister Ray, senior.—“I have read over the strange events connected with the death of the Captain of the *Pole-star*, as narrated in the journal of my son. That everything occurred exactly as he describes it I have the fullest confidence, and, indeed, the most positive certainty, for I know him to be a strong-nerved and unimaginative man, with the strictest regard for veracity. Still, the story is, on the face of it, so vague and so improbable, that I was long opposed to its publication. Within the last few days, however, I have had independent testimony upon the subject which throws a new light upon it. I had run down to Edinburgh to attend a meeting of the British Medical Association, when I chanced to come across Dr. P——, an old college chum of mine, now practising at Saltash, in Devonshire. Upon my telling him of this experience of my son's, he declared to me that he was familiar with the man, and proceeded, to my no small surprise, to give me a description of him, which tallied



remarkably well with that given in the journal, except that he depicted him as a younger man. According to his account, he had been engaged to a young lady of singular beauty residing upon the Cornish coast. During his absence at sea his betrothed had died under circumstances of peculiar horror.]

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## WHY NEW HOUSES ARE HAUNTED.

I MADE an interesting acquaintance the other day. He sat on my right hand at dinner, and, judging by appearance, he might as well have been of note as not. He spoke in German, rapidly, with a precision very much to the point—being one of those large-browed, bright-eyed individuals who can distinguish between masks and faces at a glance, and give a pretty accurate guess as to the kind of soul behind either. His under lip was deeply indented, so that, when smiling, his mouth assumed the same triangular form that characterized Heine, though his humour, while leaning towards sarcasm, was never bitter.

"I saw an old friend to-day," he said, suddenly, turning from his wife to me and throwing one arm comfortably over the back of his chair; "I met him first this summer in the Engadine."

"You were glad to meet him again, then," said I.

"Most uncommonly glad," he answered, shaking



his head emphatically. "Though I never spoke three words to him in my life, yet I can say, with all my heart, that it gives me exceeding joy to see him again. It is impossible to be bored where he is!"

"Are *you* ever bored?" I asked.

"I?" he returned heartily. "Not I, thank God! I am proud to say, I have never been bored a single hour in my life. I see other people wearying themselves; but, while their folly and my own remain to laugh at, *ennui* stays far from me. If it came near, the recollection of my Engadine friend would banish it at once. I will describe him. You will know him, then, for ever, for there cannot be his like on earth. Two such prodigies would be greater bounty on the part of nature than we poor sinners dare expect. He is about the middle height, has gray hair and a voice like far-off thunder. I should say, rather, a voice lost in a cellar that rolls and rolls through wine-filled vaults, seeking an outlet in vain. His nose is a colour-study for painters; yes, on my word, a real colour-study. It is of good size, and has every variety of shade ranging through purple, red and blue. It is a marvel! In the summer this gentleman walked about, attended by two young servant-maids, both strong and healthy, and both crowned with red silk handkerchiefs. These carried his walking-stick and painting ap-



paratus—for he is an artist, of course, and paints wonderful pictures, all green and blue, as unlike nature as anything is possible to be. They also provide him amusement when he is fatigued.”

Here, the three-cornered smile appeared and deepened on my neighbour's face. “The amusements are as original as the man,” he continued, chuckling. “They always consist of athletic exhibitions. He makes his girls fetch and carry like dogs, or jump over stones, or across a stick which he holds out; sometimes he joins in the sport himself, vaulting over tables and chairs at way-side inns until fatigue stops him, then the maids carry on the fun by themselves.”

“He must be mad!” I cried indignantly.

“He is English,” replied my informant demurely, but with twinkling eyes. “He was born in Italy, I believe, and owns a restaurant near some great town. This he lets, however, and spends the rent most joyously, as I can testify.”

“Does he walk about here with two maids?” I asked.

“No,” replied the German. “He left them in the Engadine. Most likely he will hire others for the winter; but you will not need them as a mark of recognition. The colour-study will be sufficient. It is a real master-piece, an astonishing combination of inharmonious shades.”



As a natural result, I looked out eagerly for this old gentleman, but for some days in vain. My German friend departed, and his story was well-nigh forgotten, when it was brought to mind one night towards the end of *table d'hôte* by a Voice—I spell it advisedly with a capital—such as I had never conceived possible from man.

It reverberated solemnly through the *salle-à-manger* like the deepest organ-note; nor did it seem to come from any person present, but from a vast cavern underground, some huge, mysterious void inhabited by ghosts and ghouls. And the Voice said:

“No, I would not insure *all* effervescing drinks. Not soda-water, for instance!”

As the contrast between the sepulchral tone and the words themselves was supremely ludicrous, a burst of general laughter followed, which rose louder and louder as one after another at table caught the infection and first tittered because their neighbour roared, then roared because they could not help themselves. Peal succeeded peal till the rafters rang, and as the last died away, the Voice spoke again from Hades, reflectively and slowly:

“Or ginger-beer!”

And instantly the senseless merriment broke out afresh. I speculated on the force of influences, laughing the while myself as heartily as any; and, as



I speculated, the German's description of his Engadine acquaintance came back to me, and I leaned forward to see the originator of the excess. He was thoughtfully pouring out a tumbler of Chianti from a flask, and a shadow of the ruby liquid was cast upon the bluer portion of that famous colour-study for painters, which ranged through purple and red.

The Master of Maidens looked up from his occupation.

"Sir," said he, and the marvellous Voice rumbled and echoed above the tumult of many tongues, "that won't do! You make a great mistake. If you were to pull down a haunted house twenty times over, and rebuild it in a different locality each time—if you were to divide it into twenty cottages, it would remain haunted to the end. I know, Mr. Barrister, from bitter experience."

"Tell us all about it, Mr. Brace," suggested the gentleman addressed, who acted as president at his end of the table.

"Oh, yes; I dare say! Tell you all about it! Sir, I am a man with a conscience!"

"We don't doubt it in the least," said the barrister.

"With a heavy conscience, a restless conscience, a conscience that never will allow itself sleep, or me a moment's peace!" moaned the Voice.



"Confession is good for the soul, sir," remarked an American.

"Eh?"—the monosyllable was very doleful. "With you as Father Confessor? I doubt it, sir; I doubt it. You're too young and too d——d good-looking!"

And again the chorus of senseless merriment rose to a shriek and gradually died away. Then the Voice was heard, gallant in a ghostly fashion that made my flesh creep.

"Why not, madam?" it rolled. "Why not? Ladies must be obeyed under all circumstances whatsoever. Certainly, I will tell my misfortune, if *you* care to listen:—

"When I came of age I inherited two houses from my father, the rents of which were to be my income, as they had been his. One, luckily, is profitable, rising in value; the other is a never-ceasing source of trouble. I say 'is,' for, though long since passed out of my hands, thank God, it plagues and bothers its present owners as it plagued and bothered me; which is saying a good deal.

"I am not going to tell you where this house was originally built; that has nothing to do with the question. It might have been in Russia quite as well as in Japan or Mexico. What happens in one country at one time, may happen in another country



at another time, and the explanation of either will account for both, provided the causes of both are identical. That's logic, Mr. Barrister, ain't it?"

"Just so," said the barrister superciliously. "Was your father a solicitor, Mr. Brace?"

"He was," growled the Voice. "And can *you* tell me, sir, the difference between a solicitor and a barrister?"

"No, I can't," drawled the president.

"The same difference as between a crocodile and an alligator," roared the Voice angrily; and as the laugh turned against his victim, Mr. Brace poured out another tumblerful of Chianti and drank it off at a draught.

"Well, madam," he continued more gently, "this second house had come into my father's hands in the way of business. When clients could not pay their fees in cash he was sometimes willing to accept their dwellings instead. 'Buildings pay ten per cent. and are safe investment,' he used to say. I wish to goodness he had not been quite so sure; I'd have been so much the richer then. But, as he did not consult me, I knew nothing about the transaction until after his death, when the will was read. I first set eyes on the abominable swindle when I went to inspect the premises.

"I found a square, solemn edifice, overgrown with



ivy, standing in the middle of a few acres of pleasure ground which had been utterly neglected for years. High brick walls divided the property from the rest of the world; within them you might fancy yourself the first or last man, according to taste, so complete was the sense of isolation. Foreign trees, rare shrubs, stumps of weather-stained statues, moss-grown fountains, and grass-grown walks were sorrowfully suggestive of by-gone grandeur. Indoors it was much the same; echoing corridors, crooked staircases, unexpected rooms with painted ceilings in unexpected places, approached by unexpected ways. Upon my word, I felt odd as I tramped through them!

“‘Ugh!’ I exclaimed at last to the caretaker, ‘the house might be haunted!’

“‘It is haunted, sir,’ she returned quietly. ‘But I’m used to it. Nothing will hurt me if I keep away from the Red Room after dark.’

“‘Ah! the Red Room!’ said I, looking at her (she was an old scarecrow); ‘and which may that be?’

“She brought me into a large, bare apartment on the ground floor, where spiders had made themselves a paradise of dust and web. There was a long mirror opposite the fireplace, and the room was lighted by French windows opening on a terrace that ended on one side at the gravel sweep before the entrance,



on the other at a wall and an iron door admitting into the fruit-garden. A dismal row of terra-cotta vases ornamented the farther edge of this walk, and a broken set of steps led down to a lawn where the grass had grown rank round a deep basin of stagnant water. The lawn itself was bounded by a thick row of laurels that hid the ivied outer walls. No one could cross the grass without leaving tracks as in a meadow; no one could enter or leave by the iron door because it was locked and the key in my possession; and I suddenly determined no one should escape by the great gate under the archway, through which I had driven in, for I would lock it and keep that key too, while I slept or watched in the Red Room that very night.

“The old woman turned pale when I told her my intention, which confirmed my resolve. How could I let a haunted house, unless I proved the tales were groundless? And how could I prove them except by experience? And the best way of assuring myself a good night’s rest was by giving rogues no time for preparation. I would not allow the hag to say a word. ‘For,’ said I, ‘I know nothing about the house or its antecedents, therefore imagination can scarcely run away with me; at all events, if it does, it will be in a new line.’ Accordingly I bid her rig up a bed near the fireplace, to avoid the reflection of



the mirror, and clear the spiders out, collect chairs and tables from the other rooms, and light a roaring fire to make the place more comfortable, whilst I drove back to town for provisions, candles, &c., and to fetch my pistols and my dog.

“Zamba was of Danish breed, slate-coloured, and fierce to every one but me. She loved me, poor unfortunate brute, as well as a woman might have done, and she disposed of her rivals more effectually. We were both in high spirits when I returned with her about sunset. I sent the trap away, and, having locked the gates, instituted, with Zamba’s aid, a thorough search of the premises outside and in. I knew nothing could escape her prying nose. She was amazingly curious; she examined every hole and corner of the grounds, tracking the rank grass near the pool in every direction. But she found nothing. Indoors it was the same; there was lots of dust, but besides, not even a rat (except the housekeeper) in that accursed house from garret to cellar.

“I forgot to say, the weather was fine and clear for the time of year. The moon, too, was luckily at the full, and would shine on the terrace a good part of the night. Nature herself seemed inclined to aid me.

“When Zamba and I had finished our rounds, I took her into the Red Room. Here she was not



quite so satisfied. She sniffed the air doubtfully once or twice, and looked inquiringly into my face; then she walked slowly to the window, looked out, came back to me, wagging her tail uncertainly, as if to ask, Is it all right? Her doubts were quelled for the moment when I reassured her by voice and caresses, and she stretched herself at full length on the hearth before the now blazing fire.

“The twilight was deepening, and the old woman, whom I had called to help in unpacking the stores, asked permission to go away. I told her to light two duplex lamps first, and place them in the two darkest corners of the room. She grinned approval of the precaution, but as, having obeyed me, she was about to vanish into cannier regions, she paused with the door-handle in her hand, and said in a rapid whisper:

“‘All the lamps and candles,’ here she eyed the four I had ranged on the supper-table, ‘in the world won’t help you, sir, if you haven’t plenty of matches. There’s another box, sir, *and don’t let it lie on the table!*’

“The door slammed behind her; next moment it opened again and she said:

“‘But that won’t help you either, for no one ever came out of this room alive after a night spent in it —*and no one ever will!*’



"She was gone. I picked up the matches from the floor, where she had flung them, and blessed her for the forethought, for I had forgotten to bring any with me, and as I put them in my pocket Zamba whined.

"‘What’s the matter, old girl?’ I asked. ‘You and I are going to have grand fun to-night, ain’t we?’

"But she heaved a deep sigh and put her nose between her paws.

"Between eating, feeding Zamba, reading and smoking, time passed pretty quickly until ten o’clock. Then looking up I saw the full moon shining in at the long French windows. I thought I should like to stroll on the terrace, and calling Zamba I lit a fresh cigar and went out into the open air.

"Not a leaf was stirring; the moonlight fell on the dew-drops hanging on the long, limp blades of grass, so that each bead resembled a pearl, so pure, so soft was their radiance. Not a grasshopper, not a frog broke the stillness with chirp or croak. I never felt a silence so intensely in my life; yet it was not oppressive; it was like falling asleep—a sweet luxurious sense of repose. Even Zamba fell under the influence and walked quietly beside me, sometimes thrusting her nozzle into my hand courting



caresses, or touching my fingers lightly with her tongue.

"I don't know how long we had been pacing the walk in this fashion, when Zamba cocked her ears.

"'What is it?' I asked her gently. She glanced quickly into my face and wagged her tail, then put back her ears and whined. I listened anxiously.

"And presently a full, sweet woman's voice began to sing—to vocalize. It seemed to come from the sweep before the door. There was nothing odd about it, nothing unusual. I thought a vagrant artist was singing on the chance of gaining pence, but that her voice was superior to most of the class—in fact, I never heard a better on any stage. Sometimes the sound came nearer, sometimes it drifted farther off, as if the songstress were moving up and down before the house, to see if at any window there were signs of life. No words were distinguishable in the song; runs, trills, and sorrowful single notes of exceeding beauty followed one another, melodiously indeed, but with no regard to order—at least, I have not known a composition approaching that in structure. It carried me away. I listened and listened till my cigar went out, and listened still to the enchanting strains, now rising, now falling, as I imagined the woman approached or retired from the terrace. Suddenly it ceased.



“‘Poor thing!’ I said aloud, awaking as from a dream. ‘We must give her some food and see what can be done for her. Come along, Zamba!’

“Zamba crawled after me. I remembered her reluctance next day. As I came into the Red Room I looked about for a half loaf and some fowl I had left from supper, and, as I stooped to pile the food together, the song burst out again; but, this time, as if the singer stood on the terrace, almost in the room.

“I did not turn at once, for the chicken would not balance on the loaf; when I did turn, the song had ceased, and to my utter amazement there was no one near the open window.

“‘Hullo!’ I said, ‘that’s odd!’

“Going to the threshold, I saw the terrace was deserted; then, for the first time, I recollected the great gates were locked, the keys in my possession, and that no living being could enter the precincts without my knowledge! Calling to Zamba, I ran out, intending to search the garden and shrubbery with her. She obeyed reluctantly; when I urged her forward she gazed piteously into my face and whined; and, on my persisting, she rose on her hind legs and placed her fore-paws on my breast. Poor brute! After that we went back together to



the Red Room no wiser than we had left it. I looked at my watch as we came in. It was twenty minutes past twelve.

"Sitting down in the arm-chair I piled fresh logs on the fire. Zamba took up her old position on the rug, with her nose between her paws, and watched the window suspiciously. About ten minutes later, one of the duplex lamps went out, and Zamba rose slowly, growling angrily. The next instant the other lamp went out, and the dog, barking furiously, flew at Something which was coming in from the terrace. I saw the animal spring into the air about the height a man's throat would be from the ground. I saw nothing between me and the outer air except Zamba; the moonlight streamed full across the rank grass, the stagnant pool and the terrace, and no shadow intercepted its path to me. But Zamba certainly attacked Something, and, as certainly, her body was immediately flung violently backwards, so that she fell at my feet dead, her neck hideously twisted and broken.

"I seized my pistols and fired at Nothing. One of the four candles on the table was put out. Remembering the old woman's warning, I laid one revolver down and tried to light the candle from another. Then, in the mirror opposite, for the first time I perceived Something. It was a Hand, pale



and sinewy; it seized the revolver and carried it away. Another candle went out.

“‘This is getting serious!’ I said to myself, and I stuck the second pistol into my coat-pocket that I might relight the two candles at once. The others went out. I lighted them again. Once more two were extinguished; the second revolver was snatched from my pocket. The third candle went out. I snatched out the matches and lighted it, the other was extinguished. I relighted it, and so the game went on; as fast as one candle went out I struck a match and lit it again, to be put out again, and so on *da capo*. I observed, too, that other Hands had joined that pale one, hovering and circling in the air, now vanishing, now appearing, and, repeated in the mirror, their number seemed countless. I was too excited to care much about them, as they had not, as yet, come very near; but the thought did occur to me: ‘How shall I keep them at bay when the matches are exhausted? Will they strangle me in the dark?’ My foot touched poor Zamba’s body, and a cold chill ran over me; for, at the same time, I perceived the Hands closer to me than ever before; and their shadowy fingers had a cruel, gripping expression that didn’t please me. I did not relish their proximity at all. The match-box was, now, nearly empty.



“‘Come!’ said I, aloud and firmly, ‘I am going to stay here all night, and walk out of this room *alive* in the morning. Matches or no matches; candles or no candles; Hands or no Hands!’

“I sat down and lighted another candle. Presently the logs on the hearth fell apart. I kicked them together with some difficulty, for striking matches takes up a good deal of attention, and, notwithstanding my danger, the humour of the situation tickled me. Surely a more ridiculous night’s work could hardly be imagined than that of lighting candles for ghosts to snuff out! If poor Zamba’s body, with its twisted neck, had not proved a terrible reality underlying the apparent comedy, I could have laughed outright, but—*only three matches remained to strike!*

“‘I *will* stay here all night,’ I repeated doggedly. ‘Light or no light; Hands or no Hands!’

“My assailants increased in number; the room was full of them, from floor to ceiling, all pale and cruel, all shadowy and indistinct, yet they did not touch me. I wondered at that, wondered what hindered them from strangling me at once as they had my dog, when I struck the last match and saw the last candle extinguished. I kicked the logs on the hearth; a shower of sparks flew into the air; and I was left in complete darkness, hemmed in by



those horrid, pallid Hands. That was a terrible moment, but my blood was up.

“‘I stay *HERE!*’ I cried furiously. ‘Hands or no Hands; matches or no matches; candles or no candles; and I *WILL* walk out of this room alive in the morning!’

“The Things paused in their advance. Only for a second, however; the next they were circling and hovering, appearing and disappearing in their old fashion, making horrid dives at me, like a flock of hellish birds hungering to pick my bones. Still I was not daunted. Having observed that my enemies advanced as my courage failed, and fled when I was bold, I concluded that my will preserved me, and that, should it fail or falter, Zamba’s fate would certainly be mine. Accordingly I resisted every impulse of fear. Leaning back in my chair, I waited for the morning, and thought the dawn would never break. Sometimes drops of exhaustion and nervous apprehension stood on my forehead, as imagination pictured those cruel, fleshless Hands behind me, their long, pale fingers, perhaps, in the act of clasping round my throat; and, at such moments, the Things thronged thicker, faster towards me, till checked by my strong determination. Half a lifetime seemed crowded into those few hours.

“At last, as my strength was giving way and hope



failing, a grey look came into the sky; a slow, soft breeze stole through the trees in the shrubbery, and a cock crew. The pale Hands swept towards me in angry crowds—I gave myself up for lost—they disappeared.”

The Voice paused. We waited in breathless silence.

“The shock of relief was too great for me, madam. I must have fainted; for, when I became conscious, the dawn had fully broken. I was lying on the floor across poor Zamba, and my old hag of a housekeeper was peeping in at the open window.

“She screamed when she saw me get up—the old goose—but, to do her justice, she was glad enough to find me alive. She brought me tea—I preferred brandy—to make me more comfortable; but she could do nothing for Zamba! Poor Zamba!”

Mr. Brace stretched out his hand for the Chianti, and as he poured out the last glass he continued:

“Now, madam, this is how my conscience became burdened. On inquiry I found that *every* room in the house was haunted by different kinds of apparitions; and so were the walks in the grounds. The voice I had heard singing was the pleasantest and most harmless of the whole lot. I could not stand that, you know. One spirit might be put up with, but fifty or sixty—no thank you! I sold my



inheritance to a contractor on condition he pulled it down. He in his turn sold the stones and bricks to a builder, who ran up a row of neat two-storied villas near a manufacturing town, using them as material. They let splendidly at first, not so well the second year, worse the third, and *not at all the fourth. For the whole lot, madam, are haunted. The pale Hands and all the ghosts in my big ghost-shop are now carrying on their nightly games in the respective villas where the stones and bricks of their respective homes were used up.* Except the songstress; she sings up and down the road instead of up and down my terrace."

"But how is your conscience troubled?" asked the lady.

"It is naturally tender," moaned the Voice. "It cannot bear the thought of having, unintentionally, been the originator of so much misery in the world as must be caused by letting loose so many apparitions. Hence it gives me no rest."

"Then you believe, Mr. Brace, the ghosts went with the bricks?" said the barrister.

"Sure of it," replied the Voice sorrowfully. "And more; every place built with old material is likely to be haunted, for what do contractors care where their bricks come from, so long as they are cheap? That's how we hear of unaccountable ghosts in brand



new villas, and why so many of them are dangerous. They don't like having been disturbed, you see."

"Very curious!" said the barrister musingly.

"I *think* I've heard about the Hands before," remarked the American. "Were you ever in Russia, Mr. Brace?"

"Sir," growled the Voice, "you are an uncommonly sharp young man—a credit to your nation, sir. But tell me first why you are not a donkey's tail."

"Why I am not a donkey's tail," repeated the American. "Can't say, I'm sure. Because he ain't my brother?"

"Because you are no end of an ass, sir!" thundered the Voice; and the old gentleman pushed back his chair from the table and left the *salle-à-manger*.



## AN EXTRA PASSENGER.

I HAD just returned to the Diamond Fields, after a trading trip into the interior of Africa, and the first evening I spent at the Kimberley Club—that oasis in the desert of Africander discomfort—had been a pleasant and convivial one enough. The somewhat Bohemian population, who have gathered together from all parts of the earth round the reef of the Kimberley mine, are cheery and hospitable to a fault. After long days spent in the solitude of the South African veldt, with no one to talk to but my partner, whom I had once mistaken for an honest man, but never for an interesting companion, and our native servants, the change was grateful enough.

Kimberley seemed to be very brisk and lively. There was plenty to talk about. Men who had just come out from England could tell me news of the old country. I had lived on the Diamond Fields for some time before I started on my trip, and as Kimberley is a place where events move pretty



quickly, my old friends had plenty to tell me of the incidents of their lives, and their luck, good, bad, or indifferent. I found that a good deal had happened to my friends, and to the world in general, while I had been dreaming away long days in my waggon, learning to care little for time as I watched the oxen toiling through the sand. It happened that I had accepted the invitation to stay with a friend who lived at Dulvitspan—a town, or rather a mining camp, about two miles from Kimberley, till I found quarters of my own; and at about twelve o'clock I remembered that I should probably not be able to find a cart—the Cape carts are the public vehicles of the Diamond Fields—to take me there. My friends pressed me to stop; one of them offered me a shake-down, but I knew what that meant, for he was a man who never missed a chance of making a night of it. Besides, after roughing it for a long time, the thought of a comfortable bed in my friend's excellent house was very pleasing to me, so I made up my mind to walk down there if I could not get a lift. As I was talking the matter over, under the verandah of the Kimberley Club, where we were lounging in wonderfully-constructed cane chairs, sipping well-iced drinks, a cart stopped outside the gate of the Club, and the driver shouted out asking if there was any one for Dulvitspan. I was in luck,



I thought to myself, when in answer to my question of what he would take me down for, he answered, whatever I chose, as he lived near where I was going, and was going to put up there. I had thought he would be likely to charge fancy prices at such a late hour of the night. Saying good night to my friends I got into the cart, and told the driver where I wanted to be taken to. As I spoke to him I was struck with his looks, which were not in his favour. Most of the cart drivers on the Diamond Fields are Malays or half-castes, but this man—an exception to the rule—was an Englishman. I liked his looks none the better on that account, for he was a typical English rough. He was a bullet-headed, beetle-browed fellow; and I thought he was as ill-looking a specimen of the human race as it had been my lot to come across for some time. He looked the last companion one would choose, I remember thinking, for a lonely drive across the veldt, if one had much valuable property about one; for he was a big, thick-set man, who might prove an awkward customer in a row.

However, I flattered myself that I did not look the sort of person any one would meddle with in a hurry; and as for valuable property, I had very little either upon me or anywhere else in the world. I did not trouble myself much about my driver's looks,



good or bad, but settled myself back in the seat of the cart to smoke a pipe, and think over all I had heard during the evening of the events that had happened on the Diamond Fields, and in the great world beyond the sea, while I had been away from civilization. What a strange lot the happy-go-lucky, cheery companions of my evening were. Here was Jack, who when I had said good-bye to him had been worth his twenty or thirty thousand pounds, and had been debating whether he would go home with what he had made, or stay out on the Fields, speculating in claims and diamonds, until he had doubled his fortune. Here he was with empty pockets and broken fortunes again, and yet with undaunted spirits. There was Tom, whose ill luck used to be proverbial, just going home with a fortune . . . I was woke up from my reverie by the cart jolting over some rough ground just outside the town or camp of Kimberley. The driver seemed to be reckless, even for a South African Jehu, for he had lashed his horses into a gallop. What startled me, however, was that I saw there was another man in the cart,—I did not think that I had gone quite off to sleep, but certainly I did not remember our stopping to take him up,—he was sitting on the front seat, next the driver; but he was sitting round in the cart, looking at the latter, so



I could see his face, which was a remarkable one from its peculiar pallor. As soon as I saw him I remembered him as a man I had known pretty well when I had lived at the Diamond Fields before. His name was Rainsford, Jack Rainsford every one used to call him; he had had several callings during the time I knew him, but when I left he seemed to have become pretty well fixed as the secretary of a Diamond Mining Company. He was strangely altered. When I had known him he had looked what he was—a merry, good-tempered young fellow—a little reckless and dissipated, but still very popular with every one. Now something seemed to be wrong with him; and almost as soon as I saw him, the idea came to me that he was not quite right in his mind.

I remembered that I had heard nothing of him at the Club, though he had been a member of it, and used to be very often there. “Hullo, Rainsford, don’t you remember me, old fellow?” I shouted out to him; but he did not seem to hear me. He sat with his eyes fixed upon the man who was driving. When I spoke the latter turned round as if he thought I was addressing him. As he did so he caught sight of Rainsford, and I could have sworn was far more surprised at seeing him than I had been. I shall never forget the look of terror that



came over the man's coarse, stupid face. He did not say one word, but he seemed to be strangely fascinated by the extra passenger, and unable to take his eyes off him to see where he was driving, though all the time he was lashing his horses unmercifully. The horses went off as if the devil were behind them, and in a second or two we were off the road, the cart swaying from side to side as it went over boulders and bushes. It was a nasty rough bit of ground, and I remembered that there were one or two wells and a shaft, which had been sunk by some persons prospecting for diamonds, not far off, so I felt anything but comfortable. My companions, however, seemed to be quite indifferent as to where we were going to. I holloaed out to the driver to look after his horses, but he paid no heed to me or to anything else except Rainsford. It seemed to me that they were more like figures in a dream than anything real, so little heed did they take of what was going on, and the danger that we were in. I must say I felt a little nervous, and very angry with the driver; and using some pretty strong language to him, I leant forward and snatched at the reins. I was not in time to get them, however, for just then he suddenly gave a cry, and with the reins in his hands, he threw himself out of the cart. The reins were gone, so there was no hope for it; and I set my



teeth and waited for the smash which now seemed to be inevitable. I had not many seconds to wait; one of the wheels of the cart came against a big stone, the cart gave a sudden lurch, I felt myself hurled through the air, and then know very little, except that I have a blurred memory of some one picking me up from the ground and moving me off. After that, the next thing I remember was finding myself in a strange room, and watching a face, which as my senses grew clearer, began to take the shape of that of a friend of mine—a doctor in practice at Kimberley. I found that he had been on his way up from Dulvitspan, where he had been to see a patient. He had seen me come to grief, and had taken me into his cart and driven me to his house. He told me I had better keep quiet, but said that there was not much the matter with me, and that I would soon be all right again.

As my mind got clearer, I remembered all about the smash and the curious way in which the driver and Rainsford had behaved. In response to my inquiries, the doctor told me that he had found the driver on the veldt, about fifty yards from where I was. He had pitched upon his head, and the fall must have proved fatal to him at once, for his neck was broken.

“Well, doctor, what happened to the other fellow?”



I asked, when I had taken in the first piece of news.

"The other fellow ! What other fellow ? Whom do you mean ?" he answered, and I noticed that he looked rather inquiringly into my face.

"I mean the other man in the cart."

"Well, if there was another man, he must have got up and cleared off pretty quick, for there were only two of you when I came up."

"Of course there was another man ; Rainsford was in the cart, Jack Rainsford, who was secretary of the Bonawsa Company—worse luck to him, for if he had kept out of it we should not have come to grief."

The doctor looked at me for a second or two without speaking, then he got up to leave the room, saying—

"Oh yes, he was all right. But look here, old fellow, you had better not talk any more. I will come back in an hour or two, and see how you are getting on."

I could not understand his manner, for he seemed to think I was wandering and not myself, and yet my question had been sensible enough. I felt that I was not much the worse for my shaking, and I could not think why the doctor had not answered my question about Rainsford. Had he been killed also ? and did the doctor think it would be bad for



me to hear of it? As a matter of fact, though I should have been sorry for him, such news would not have upset me. I could not understand why he had said that there were only two of us in the cart, when he saw I remembered all about what had taken place.

When the doctor came back he seemed to be pleased to find me quite sensible. "You will do now. I did not quite like the way you were talking just now, but you're all right now."

"I was all right then; I only asked about Rainsford. Why shouldn't I have done so, when he was in the cart when we came to grief? We must have taken him up somewhere just outside the camp," I answered; and went on to tell him exactly what had taken place the night before, and described the odd behaviour of the two men.

The doctor listened to me rather impatiently. "Well, it's curious that a delusion like that should stick to you, but you must see it's all nonsense; and as for Rainsford being in your cart—well, if you saw him, you're the only man in Kimberley who has seen him for some time, and one or two people have been looking for him anxiously enough, for it is six weeks since he cleared off with a parcel of diamonds, worth some thousands of pounds, that belonged to his Company."



"Then depend upon it he didn't clear off, but has been hiding somewhere in the camp; for there is no doubt about it, that I saw him last night. I know it was Rainsford, although he was a good deal altered," I said with an air of certainty.

The doctor, however, was not much impressed with my story. He evidently thought that my brain had not quite got over the effects of the smash of the night before, and considering that I would be better kept quiet, he left the room. The next day when he came to see me, however, he began to talk about what he still was inclined to call my delusion.

"It is curious that you should have got that idea into your head, about having seen Rainsford, for it turns out that the man who drove you must have had something to do with him. The man wore a belt, when he was killed, in which a lot of diamonds were found; and now it seems that several of the stones have been identified, by people connected with the Bonawsa Company, as part of the parcel which Rainsford took away with him. There were one or two stones which the manager, who found them in the wash-up, and gave them to him, can swear to."

"Well, doctor, do you call it a delusion now? It seems to me that it bears out my theory, that I saw Rainsford the other night."



"I don't know what to make of it; but if he were in the cart, where was he when I came up to you?" asked my friend.

"Well, I suppose he had better luck than I had, and cleared off none the worse for his shaking; for he was in the cart sure enough. But it is no good telling any one about it; for if he is hiding about the camp, he might as well get off as not now the diamonds are recovered," I said.

"I sha'n't tell any one, and if I did they wouldn't believe it; for what every one is saying to-day is, that Jack Rainsford never got out of the camp, but that your friend the driver found out that he was clearing off with the diamonds, and did for him, and got hold of 'em in that way. It's jumping to a conclusion a bit; but that's what the boys are saying," said the doctor; and then he turned the conversation to some other subject.

When I got about again, I found the subject of conversation was the wonderful recovery of the diamonds Jack Rainsford was supposed to have gone off with, and the general opinion was the one the doctor had mentioned. He professed to think it not unlikely, and returned to the theory that what I thought I had seen was a delusion.

I must, so he argued, have heard about Rainsford's disappearance at the Club, and mixed him up with



my memory of the upset of the cart. I felt a good deal annoyed at his obstinacy, and we had one or two rather heated arguments on the subject. One morning, about ten days after my chuck-out of the cart, the doctor came up to me when I came into the Kimberley Club, with an expression of triumph on his face.

"Well, have you heard the news? Who was right now, do you suppose?"

"What news?"

"Why about Rainsford; they have found him!"

"I thought they would; so you see I was right about him never having left Kimberley."

"No, he never did; but I don't know how you could have seen him that night, for he was found in a well, covered with gravel and rubbish, and he must have been there since he disappeared seven weeks ago, poor fellow," was the doctor's answer.

I must say that I felt somewhat staggered at this information, and I was still more horrified at what I afterwards learnt. The mystery of his disappearance had been cleared up by the police. They had learnt from the wife of my driver, that her husband had agreed, the day before the unfortunate secretary had disappeared, to drive him away from Kimberley to a place over the Transvaal border. They were to start at night, and her husband had driven up to



Rainsford's house, but had come home in an hour or so, saying that he had given up the job because they had not come to terms. From Rainsford's Kaffir servant they had learnt that he had started in the cart, and the inference was obvious, that the driver had guessed that his fare was not setting out on his midnight flitting empty-handed, and had murdered him, and thrown him down the well where he had been found.

That well was just outside the camp on the road to Dulvitspan, and when it was pointed out to me, I remembered that it must have been when we were passing it that I first saw Rainsford sitting by the side of the driver. When I heard this, the events of that night came back to me with wonderful clearness, and I saw the scene again. I know it was no dream or delusion, for what I had seen the driver had seen also; and now that I knew of his secret I could understand the terror that must have come over him, when he looked round and saw the extra passenger we had taken up.

I never told my story to any one on the Diamond Fields. I felt a great objection to being questioned and chaffed about it, as I knew I should be. My friend, the doctor, also kept what I had told him to himself. We had several conversations about it, but I saw the subject was very distasteful to him. He



was a bigoted materialist, and he obstinately refused to believe in my story. When I urged that I had described to him exactly what I had seen before I learnt that there was anything supernatural in it, he became impatient and irritated. How could I have seen Rainsford when there was physical proof that he had been murdered weeks before ? he would ask ; and then he would say very little more except to beg that his name should not be mixed up with a cock-and-bull story like mine. I could see, however, that in his own mind he was disturbed at the shake his convictions had sustained, and on this account he was all the more determined not to give in to me. I let him have his own way, and said no more about it ; but to this day I am as certain as I am of anything that ever happened to me, of what we both saw that night, when I was driven by poor Jack Rainsford's murderer past the spot where his body lay at the bottom of the well.



## JOHN BARRINGTON COWLES.\*

### THE STORY OF A MEDICAL STUDENT.

It might seem rash of me to say that I ascribe the death of my poor friend, John Barrington Cowles, to any preternatural agency. I am aware that in the present state of public feeling a chain of evidence would require to be strong indeed before the possibility of such a conclusion could be admitted.

I shall therefore merely state the circumstances which led up to this sad event as concisely and as plainly as I can, and leave every reader to draw his own deductions. Perhaps there may be some one who can throw light upon what is dark to me.

I first met Barrington Cowles when I went up to Edinburgh University to take out medical classes there. My landlady in Northumberland Street had a large house, and, being a widow without children, she gained a livelihood by providing accommodation for several students.

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Barrington Cowles happened to have taken a bedroom upon the same floor as mine, and when we came to know each other better we shared a small sitting-room, in which we took our meals. In this manner we originated a friendship which was unmarred by the slightest disagreement up to the day of his death.

Cowles' father was the colonel of a Sikh regiment, and had remained in India for many years. He allowed his son a handsome income, but seldom gave any other sign of parental affection—writing irregularly and briefly.

My friend, who had himself been born in India, and whose whole disposition was an ardent tropical one, was much hurt by this neglect. His mother was dead, and he had no other relation in the world to supply the blank.

Thus he came in time to concentrate all his affection upon me, and to confide in me in a manner which is rare among men. Even when a stronger and deeper passion came upon him, it never infringed upon the old tenderness between us.

Cowles was a tall, slim young fellow, with an olive, Velasquez-like face, and dark, tender eyes. I have seldom seen a man who was more likely to excite a woman's interest, or to captivate her imagination.

His expression was, as a rule, dreamy, and even



languid ; but if in conversation a subject arose which interested him he would be all animation in a moment. On such occasions his colour would heighten, his eyes gleam, and he could speak with an eloquence which would carry his audience with him.

In spite of these natural advantages he led a solitary life, avoiding female society, and reading with great diligence. He was one of the foremost men of his year, taking the senior medal for anatomy, and the Neil Arnott prize for physics.

How well I can remember the first time we met her ! Often and often I have recalled the circumstances, and tried to recall what the exact impression was which she produced on my mind at the time.

After we came to know her my judgment was warped, so that I am curious to recollect what my unbiassed instincts were. It is hard, however, to eliminate the feelings which reason or prejudice afterwards raised in me.

It was at the opening of the Royal Scottish Academy in the spring of 1879. My poor friend was passionately attached to art in every form, and a pleasing chord in music or a delicate effect upon canvas would give exquisite pleasure to his highly-strung nature. We had gone together to see the pictures, and were standing in the grand central



salon, when I noticed an extremely beautiful woman standing at the other side of the room.

In my whole life I have never seen such a classically perfect countenance. It was the real Greek type—the forehead broad, very low, and as white as marble, with a cloudlet of delicate locks wreathing round it, the nose straight and clean cut, the lips inclined to thinness, the chin and lower jaw beautifully rounded off, and yet sufficiently developed to promise unusual strength of character.

But those eyes—those wonderful eyes! If I could but give some faint idea of their varying moods, their steely hardness, their feminine softness, their power of command, their penetrating intensity suddenly melting away into an expression of womanly weakness—but I am speaking now of future impressions!

There was a tall, yellow-haired young man with this lady, whom I at once recognized as a law student with whom I had a slight acquaintance.

Archibald Reeves—for that was his name—was a dashing, handsome young fellow, and had at one time been a ringleader in every university escapade; but of late I had seen little of him, and the report was that he was engaged to be married. His companion was, then, I presumed, his *fiancée*. I seated myself upon the velvet settee in the centre of the



room, and furtively watched the couple from behind my catalogue.

The more I looked at her the more her beauty grew upon me. She was somewhat short in stature, it is true; but her figure was perfection, and she bore herself in such a fashion that it was only by actual comparison that one would have known her to be under the medium height.

As I kept my eyes upon them, Reeves was called away for some reason, and the young lady was left alone. Turning her back to the pictures, she passed the time until the return of her escort in taking a deliberate survey of the company, without paying the least heed to the fact that a dozen pair of eyes, attracted by her elegance and beauty, were bent curiously upon her. With one of her hands holding the red silk cord which surrounded the pictures, she stood languidly moving her eyes from face to face with as little self-consciousness as if she were looking at the canvas creatures behind her. Suddenly, as I watched her, I saw her gaze become fixed and, as it were, intense. I followed the direction of her looks, wondering what could have attracted her so strongly.

John Barrington Cowles was standing before a picture—one, I think, by Noel Paton—I know that the subject was a noble and ethereal one. His



profile was turned towards us, and never have I seen him to such advantage. I have said that he was a strikingly handsome man, but at that moment he looked absolutely magnificent. It was evident that he had momentarily forgotten his surroundings, and that his whole soul was in sympathy with the picture before him. His eyes sparkled, and a dusky pink shone through his clear olive cheeks. She continued to watch him fixedly, with a look of interest upon her face, until he came out of his reverie with a start, and turned abruptly round, so that his gaze met hers. She glanced away at once, but his eyes remained fixed upon her for some moments. The picture was forgotten already, and his soul had come down to earth once more.

We caught sight of her once or twice before we left, and each time I noticed my friend look after her. He made no remark, however, until we got out into the open air, and were walking arm-in-arm down Prince's Street.

"Did you notice that beautiful woman, in the dark dress, with the white fur?" he asked.

"Yes, I saw her," I answered.

"Do you know her?" he asked, eagerly. "Have you any idea who she is?"

"I don't know her personally," I replied. "But I have no doubt I could find out all about her, for



I believe she is engaged to young Archie Reeves, and he and I have a lot of mutual friends."

"Engaged!" ejaculated Cowles.

"Why, my dear boy," I said, laughing, "you don't mean to say you are so susceptible that the fact that a girl to whom you never spoke in your life is engaged is enough to upset you?"

"Well, not exactly to upset me," he answered, forcing a laugh. "But I don't mind telling you, Armitage, that I never was so taken by any one in my life. It wasn't the mere beauty of the face—though that was perfect enough—but it was the character and the intellect upon it. I hope, if she is engaged, that it is to some man who will be worthy of her."

"Why," I remarked, "you speak quite feelingly. It is a clear case of love at first sight, Jack. However, to put your peturbed spirit at rest, I'll make a point of finding out all about her whenever I meet any fellow who is likely to know."

Barrington Cowles thanked me, and the conversation drifted off into other channels. For several days neither of us made any allusion to the subject, though my companion was perhaps a little more dreamy and distraught than usual. The incident had almost vanished from my remembrance, when one day young Brodie, who is a second cousin of



mine, came up to me on the university steps with the face of a bearer of tidings.

"I say," he began, "you know Reeves, don't you?"

"Yes. What of him?"

"His engagement is off."

"Off!" I cried. "Why, I only learned the other day that it was on."

"Oh, yes—it's all off. His brother told me so. Deucedly mean of Reeves, you know, if he has backed out of it, for she was an uncommonly nice girl."

"I've seen her," I said; "but I don't know her name."

"She is a Miss Northcott, and lives with an old aunt of hers in Abercrombie Place. Nobody knows anything about her people, or where she comes from. Anyhow, she is about the most unlucky girl in the world, poor soul!"

"Why unlucky?"

"Well, you know, this was her second engagement," said young Brodie, who had a marvellous knack of knowing everything about everybody. "She was engaged to Prescott—William Prescott, who died. That was a very sad affair. The wedding day was fixed, and the whole thing looked as straight as a die when the smash came."

"What smash?" I asked, with some dim recollection of the circumstances.



"Why, Prescott's death. He came to Abercrombie Place one night, and stayed very late. No one knows exactly when he left, but about one in the morning a fellow who knew him met him walking rapidly in the direction of the Queen's Park. He bade him good night, but Prescott hurried on without heeding him, and that was the last time he was ever seen alive. Three days afterwards his body was found floating in Dunsappie Loch, under St. Anthony's Chapel. No one could ever understand it, but of course the coroner brought it in as temporary insanity."

"It was very strange," I remarked.

"Yes, and deucedly rough on the poor girl," said Brodie. "Now that this other blow has come it will quite crush her. So gentle and ladylike she is, too!"

"You know her personally, then?" I asked.

"Oh, yes, I know her. I have met her several times. I could easily manage that you should be introduced to her."

"Well," I answered, "it's not so much for my own sake as for a friend of mine. However, I don't suppose she will go out much for some little time after this. When she does I will take advantage of your offer."

We shook hands on this, and I thought no more of the matter for some time.



The next incident which I have to relate as bearing at all upon the question of Miss Northcott is an unpleasant one. Yet I must detail it as accurately as possible, since it may throw some light upon the sequel. One cold night, several months after the conversation with my second cousin which I have quoted above, I was walking down one of the lowest streets in the city on my way back from a case which I had been attending. It was very late, and I was picking my way among the dirty loungers who were clustering round the doors of a great gin-palace, when a man staggered out from among them, and held out his hand to me with a drunken leer. The gaslight fell full upon his face, and, to my intense astonishment, I recognized in the degraded creature before me my former acquaintance, young Archibald Reeves, who had once been famous as one of the most dressy and particular men in the whole college. I was so utterly surprised that for a moment I almost doubted the evidence of my own senses; but there was no mistaking those features, which, though bloated with drink, still retained something of their former comeliness. I was determined to rescue him, for one night at least, from the company into which he had fallen.

“Holloa, Reeves!” I said. “Come along with me. I’m going in your direction.”



He muttered some incoherent apology for his condition, and took my arm. As I supported him towards his lodgings I could see that he was not only suffering from the effects of a recent debauch, but that a long course of intemperance had affected his nerves and his brain. His hand when I touched it was dry and feverish, and he started from every shadow which fell upon the pavement. He rambled in his speech, too, in a manner which suggested the delirium of disease rather than the talk of a drunkard.

When I got him to his lodgings I partially undressed him and laid him upon his bed. His pulse at this time was very high, and he was evidently extremely feverish. He seemed to have sunk into a doze; and I was about to steal out of the room to warn his landlady of his condition, when he started up and caught me by the sleeve of my coat.

"Don't go!" he cried. "I feel better when you are here. I am safe from her then."

"From her!" I said. "From whom?"

"Her! her!" he answered, peevishly. "Ah! you don't know her. She is the devil! Beautiful—beautiful; but the devil!"

"You are feverish and excited," I said. "Try and get a little sleep. You will wake better."

"Sleep!" he groaned. "How am I to sleep when I see her sitting down yonder at the foot of the bed



with her great eyes watching and watching hour after hour? I tell you it saps all the strength and manhood out of me. That's what makes me drink. God help me—I'm half drunk now!"

"You are very ill," I said, putting some vinegar to his temples; "and you are delirious. You don't know what you say."

"Yes, I do," he interrupted sharply, looking up at me. "I know very well what I say. I brought it upon myself. It is my own choice. But I couldn't—no, by heaven, I couldn't—accept the alternative. I couldn't keep my faith to her. It was more than man could do."

I sat by the side of the bed, holding one of his burning hands in mine, and wondering over his strange words. He lay still for some time, and then, raising his eyes to me, said, in a most plaintive voice—

"Why did she not give me warning sooner? Why did she wait until I had learned to love her so?"

He repeated this question several times, rolling his feverish head from side to side, and then he dropped into a troubled sleep. I crept out of the room, and, having seen that he would be properly cared for, left the house. His words, however, rang in my ears for days afterwards, and assumed a deeper significance when taken with what was to come.



My friend, Barrington Cowles, had been away for his summer holidays, and I had heard nothing of him for several months. When the winter session came on, however, I received a telegram from him asking me to secure the old rooms in Northumberland Street for him, and telling me the train by which he would arrive. I went down to meet him, and was delighted to find him looking wonderfully hearty and well.

"By the way," he said suddenly, that night, as we sat in our chairs by the fire, talking over the events of the holidays, "you have never congratulated me yet!"

"On what, my boy?" I asked.

"What? Do you mean to say you have not heard of my engagement?"

"Engagement! No!" I answered. "However, I am delighted to hear it, and congratulate you with all my heart."

"I wonder it didn't come to your ears," he said. "It was the queerest thing. You remember that girl whom we both admired so much at the academy?"

"What!" I cried, with a vague feeling of apprehension at my heart. "You don't mean to say that you are engaged to her?"

"I thought you would be surprised," he answered. "When I was staying with an old aunt of mine in



Peterhead, in Aberdeenshire, the Northcotts happened to come there on a visit, and as we had mutual friends we soon met. I found out that it was a false alarm about her being engaged, and then—well, you know what it is when you are thrown into the society of such a girl in a place like Peterhead. Not, mind you,” he added, “that I consider I did a foolish or hasty thing. I have never regretted it for a moment. The more I know Kate the more I admire her and love her. However, you must be introduced to her, and then you will form your own opinion.”

I expressed my pleasure at the prospect, and endeavoured to speak as lightly as I could to Cowles upon the subject, but I felt depressed and anxious at heart. The words of Reeves and the unhappy fate of young Prescott recurred to my recollection, and, though I could assign no tangible reason for it, a vague, dim fear and distrust of the woman took possession of me. It may be that this was foolish prejudice and superstition upon my part, and that I involuntarily contorted her future doings and sayings to fit into some half-formed wild theory of my own. This has been suggested to me by others as an explanation of my narrative. They are welcome to their opinion if they can reconcile it with the facts which I have to tell.



I went round with my friend a few days afterwards to call upon Miss Northcott. I remember that, as we went down Abercrombie Place, our attention was attracted by the shrill yelping of a dog—which noise proved eventually to come from the house to which we were bound. We were shown up-stairs, where I was introduced to old Mrs. Merton, Miss Northcott's aunt, and to the young lady herself. She looked as beautiful as ever, and I could not wonder at my friend's infatuation. Her face was a little more flushed than usual, and she held in her hand a heavy dog-whip, with which she had been chastising a small Scotch terrier, whose cries we had heard in the street. The poor brute was cringing up against the wall, whining piteously, and evidently completely cowed.

"So, Kate," said my friend, after we had taken our seats, "you have been falling out with Carlo again."

"Only a very little quarrel this time," she said, smiling charmingly. "He is a dear, good old fellow, but he needs correction now and then." Then, turning to me, "We all do that, Mr. Armitage, don't we? What a capital thing if, instead of receiving a collective punishment at the end of our lives, we were to have one at once, as the dogs do, when we did anything wicked. It would make us more careful, wouldn't it?"



I acknowledged that it would.

"Supposing that every time a man misbehaved himself a gigantic hand were to seize him, and he were lashed with a whip until he fainted"—she clenched her white fingers as she spoke, and cut out viciously with the dog-whip—"it would do more to keep him good than any number of high-minded theories of morality."

"Why, Kate," said my friend, "you are quite savage to-day."

"No, Jack," she laughed. "I'm only propounding a theory for Mr. Armitage's consideration."

The two began to chat together about some Aberdeenshire reminiscence, and I had time to observe Mrs. Merton, who had remained silent during our short conversation. She was a very strange-looking old lady. What attracted attention most in her appearance was the utter want of colour which she exhibited. Her hair was snow-white, and her face extremely pale. Her lips were bloodless, and even her eyes were of such a light tinge of blue that they hardly relieved the general pallor. Her dress was a grey silk, which harmonized with her general appearance. She had a peculiar expression of countenance, which I was unable at the moment to refer to its proper cause.

She was working at some old-fashioned piece of



ornamental needlework, and as she moved her arms her dress gave forth a dry, melancholy rustling, like the sound of leaves in the autumn. There was something mournful and depressing in the sight of her. I moved my chair a little nearer, and asked her how she liked Edinburgh, and whether she had been there long.

When I spoke to her she started and looked up at me with a scared look on her face. Then I saw in a moment what the expression was which I had observed there. It was one of fear—intense and overpowering fear. It was so marked that I could have staked my life on the woman before me having at some period of her life been subjected to some terrible experience or dreadful misfortune.

“Oh, yes, I like it,” she said, in a soft, timid voice; “and we have been here long—that is, not very long. We move about a great deal.” She spoke with hesitation, as if afraid of committing herself.

“You are a native of Scotland, I presume?” I said.

“No—that is, not entirely. We are not natives of any place. We are cosmopolitan, you know.” She glanced round in the direction of Miss Northcott as she spoke, but the two were still chatting together near the window. Then she suddenly bent



forward to me, with a look of intense earnestness upon her face, and said—

“Don’t talk to me any more, please. She does not like it, and I shall suffer for it afterwards. Please, don’t do it.”

I was about to ask her the reason for this strange request, but when she saw I was going to address her, she rose and walked slowly out of the room. As she did so I perceived that the lovers had ceased to talk, and that Miss Northcott was looking at me with her keen, gray eyes.

“You must excuse my aunt, Mr. Armitage,” she said; “she is odd, and easily fatigued. Come over and look at my album.”

We spent some time examining the portraits. Miss Northcott’s father and mother were apparently ordinary mortals enough, and I could not detect in either of them any traces of the character which showed itself in their daughter’s face. There was one old daguerreotype, however, which arrested my attention. It represented a man of about the age of forty, and strikingly handsome. He was clean shaven, and extraordinary power was expressed upon his prominent lower jaw and firm, straight mouth. His eyes were somewhat deeply set in his head, however, and there was a snake-like flattening at the upper part of his forehead, which detracted from his



appearance. I almost involuntarily, when I saw the head, pointed to it, and exclaimed—

“There is your prototype in your family, Miss Northcott.”

“Do you think so?” she said. “I am afraid you are paying me a very bad compliment, Uncle Anthony was always considered the black sheep of the family.”

“Indeed,” I answered; “my remark was an unfortunate one, then.”

“Oh, don’t mind that,” she said; “I always thought myself that he was worth all of them put together. He was an officer in the forty-first regiment, and he was killed in action during the Persian war—so he died nobly, at any rate.”

“That’s the sort of death I should like to die,” said Cowles, his dark eyes flashing, as they would when he was excited; “I often wish I had taken to my father’s profession instead of this vile pill-compounding drudgery.”

“Come, Jack, you are not going to die any sort of death yet,” she said, tenderly taking his hand in hers.

I could not understand the woman. There was such an extraordinary mixture of masculine decision and womanly tenderness about her, with the consciousness of something all her own in the background, that she fairly puzzled me. I hardly knew,



therefore, how to answer Cowles when, as we walked down the street together, he asked the comprehensive question—

“Well, what do you think of her?”

“I think she is wonderfully beautiful,” I answered, guardedly.

“That, of course,” he replied, irritably. “You knew that before you came!”

“I think she is very clever too,” I remarked.

Barrington Cowles walked on for some time, and then he suddenly turned on me with the strange question—

“Do you think she is cruel? Do you think she is the sort of girl who would take a pleasure in inflicting pain?”

“Well, really,” I answered, “I have hardly had time to form an opinion.”

We then walked on for some time in silence.

“She is an old fool,” at length muttered Cowles. “She is mad.”

“Who is?” I asked.

“Why, that old woman—that aunt of Kate’s—Mrs. Merton, or whatever her name is.”

Then I knew that my poor colourless friend had been speaking to Cowles, but he never said anything more as to the nature of her communication.

My companion went to bed early that night, and



I sat up a long time by the fire, thinking over all that I had seen and heard. I felt that there was some mystery about the girl—some dark fatality so strange as to defy conjecture. I thought of Prescott's interview with her before their marriage, and the fatal termination of it. I coupled it with poor drunken Reeves' plaintive cry, "Why did she not tell me sooner?" and with the other words he had spoken. Then my mind ran over Mrs. Merton's warning to me, Cowles' reference to her, and even the episode of the whip and the cringing dog.

The whole effect of my recollections was unpleasant to a degree, and yet there was no tangible charge which I could bring against the woman. It would be worse than useless to attempt to warn my friend until I had definitely made up my mind what I was to warn him against. He would treat any charge against her with scorn. What could I do? How could I get at some tangible conclusion as to her character and antecedents? No one in Edinburgh knew them except as recent acquaintances. She was an orphan, and as far as I knew she had never disclosed where her former home had been. Suddenly an idea struck me. Among my father's friends there was a Colonel Joyce, who had served a long time in India upon the staff, and who would be likely to know most of the officers who had



been out there since the Mutiny. I sat down at once, and, having trimmed the lamp, proceeded to write a letter to the Colonel. I told him that I was very curious to gain some particulars about a certain Captain Northcott, who had served in the Forty-first Foot, and who had fallen in the Persian war. I described the man as well as I could from my recollection of the daguerreotype, and then, having directed the letter, posted it that very night, after which, feeling that I had done all that could be done, I retired to bed, with a mind too anxious to allow me to sleep.

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## PART II.

I GOT an answer from Leicester, where the Colonel resided, within two days. I have it before me as I write, and copy it verbatim.

"DEAR BOB," it said, "I remember the man well. I was with him at Calcutta, and afterwards at Hyderabad. He was a curious, solitary sort of mortal; but a gallant soldier enough, for he distinguished himself at Sobraon, and was wounded, if I remember right. He was not popular in his corps—they said he was a pitiless, cold-blooded fellow, with



no geniality in him. There was a rumour, too, that he was a devil-worshipper, or something of that sort, and also that he had the evil eye, which, of course, was all nonsense. He had some strange theories, I remember, about the power of the human will and the effects of mind upon matter.

"How are you getting on with your medical studies? Never forget, my boy, that your father's son has every claim upon me, and that if I can serve you in any way I am always at your command.

"Ever affectionately yours,

"EDWARD JOYCE.

"P.S.—By the way, Northcott did not fall in action. He was killed after peace was declared in a crazy attempt to get some of the eternal fire from the sun-worshipper's temple. There was considerable mystery about his death."

I read this epistle over several times—at first with a feeling of satisfaction, and then with one of disappointment. I had come on some curious information, and yet hardly what I wanted. He was an eccentric man, a devil-worshipper, and rumoured to have the power of the evil eye. I could believe the young lady's eyes, when endowed with that cold, gray shimmer which I had noticed in them once or twice, to be capable of any evil which human eye ever



wrought; but still the superstition was an effete one. Was there not more meaning in that sentence which followed—"He had theories of the power of the human will and of the effect of mind upon matter"? I remember having once read a quaint treatise, which I had imagined to be mere charlatanism at the time, of the power of certain human minds, and of effects produced by them at a distance. Was Miss Northcott endowed with some exceptional power of the sort? The idea grew upon me, and very shortly I had evidence which convinced me of the truth of the supposition.

It happened that at the very time when my mind was dwelling upon this subject, I saw a notice in the paper that our town was to be visited by Doctor Messinger, the well-known medium and mesmerist. Messinger was a man whose performance, such as it was, had been again and again pronounced to be genuine by competent judges. He was far above trickery, and had the reputation of being the soundest living authority upon the strange pseudo-sciences of animal magnetism and electro-biology. Determined, therefore, to see what the human will could do, even against all the disadvantages of glaring footlights and a public platform, I took a ticket for the first night of the performance, and went with several student friends.



We had secured one of the side boxes, and did not arrive until after the performance had begun. I had hardly taken my seat before I recognized Barrington Cowles, with his *fiancée* and old Mrs. Merton, sitting in the third or fourth row of the stalls. They caught sight of me at almost the same moment, and we bowed to each other. The first portion of the lecture was somewhat commonplace, the lecturer giving tricks of pure legerdemain, with one or two manifestations of mesmerism, performed upon a subject whom he had brought with him. He gave us an exhibition of clairvoyance too, throwing his subject into a trance, and then demanding particulars as to the movements of absent friends, and the whereabouts of hidden objects, all of which appeared to be answered satisfactorily. I had seen all this before, however. What I wanted to see now was the effect of the lecturer's will when exerted upon some independent member of the audience.

He came round to that as the concluding exhibition in his performance. "I have shown you," he said, "that a mesmerized subject is entirely dominated by the will of the mesmerizer. He loses all power of volition, and his very thoughts are such as are suggested to him by the master-mind. The same end may be attained without any preliminary process. A strong will can, simply by virtue of its strength,



take possession of a weaker one, even at a distance, and can regulate the impulses and the actions of the owner of it. If there was one man in the world who had a very much more highly-developed will than any of the rest of the human family, there is no reason why he should not be able to rule over them all, and to reduce his fellow-creatures to the condition of automatons. Happily there is such a dead level of mental power, or rather of mental weakness, among us that such a catastrophe is not likely to occur; but still within our small compass there are variations which produce surprising effects. I shall now single out one of the audience, and endeavour 'by the mere power of will' to compel him to come upon the platform, and do and say what I wish. Let me assure you that there is no collusion, and that the subject whom I may select is at perfect liberty to resent to the uttermost any impulse which I may communicate to him."

With these words the lecturer came to the front of the platform, and glanced over the first few rows of the stalls. No doubt Cowles' dark skin and bright eyes marked him out as a man of a highly nervous temperament, for the mesmerist picked him out in a moment, and fixed his eyes upon him. I saw my friend give a start of surprise, and then settle down in his chair, as if to express his determination not to



yield to the influence of the operator. Messinger was not a man whose head denoted any great brain-power, but his gaze was singularly intense and penetrating. Under the influence of it Cowles made one or two spasmodic motions of his hands, as if to grasp the sides of his seat, and then half rose, but only to sink down again, though with an evident effort. I was watching the scene with intense interest, when I happened to catch a glimpse of Miss Northcott's face. She was sitting with her eyes fixed intently upon the mesmerist, and with such an expression of concentrated power upon her features as I have never seen on any other human countenance. Her jaw was firmly set, her lips compressed, and her face as hard as if it were a beautiful sculpture cut out of the whitest marble. Her eyebrows were drawn down, however, and from beneath them her gray eyes seemed to sparkle and gleam with a cold light.

I looked at Cowles again, expecting every moment to see him rise and obey the mesmerist's wishes, when there came from the platform a short, gasping cry as of a man utterly worn out and prostrated by a prolonged struggle. Messinger was leaning against the table, his hand to his forehead, and the perspiration pouring down his face. "I won't go on," he cried, addressing the audience. "There is a stronger will than mine acting against me. You must excuse



me for to-night." The man was evidently ill, and utterly unable to proceed, so the curtain was lowered, and the audience dispersed, with many comments upon the lecturer's sudden indisposition.

I waited outside the hall until my friend and the ladies came out. Cowles was laughing over his recent experience.

"He didn't succeed with me, Bob," he cried triumphantly, as he shook my hand. "I think he caught a Tartar that time."

"Yes," said Miss Northcott, "I think that Jack ought to be very proud of his strength of mind; don't you, Mr. Armitage?"

"It took me all my time, though," my friend said, seriously. "You can't conceive what a strange feeling I had once or twice. All the strength seemed to have gone out of me—especially just before he collapsed himself."

I walked round with Cowles, in order to see the ladies home. He walked in front with Mrs. Merton, and I found myself behind with the young lady. For a minute or so I walked beside her without making any remark, and then I suddenly blurted out, in a manner which must have seemed somewhat brusque to her—

"You did that, Miss Northcott."

"Did what?" she asked, sharply.



"Why, mesmerized the mesmerizer—I suppose that is the best way of describing the transaction."

"What a strange idea!" she said, laughing. "You give me credit for a strong will then?"

"Yes," I said. "For a dangerously strong one."

"Why dangerous?" she asked, in a tone of surprise.

"I think," I answered, "that any will which can exercise such power is dangerous—for there is always a chance of its being turned to bad uses."

"You would make me out a very dreadful individual, Mr. Armitage," she said, and then, looking up suddenly in my face—"You have never liked me. You are suspicious of me and distrust me, though I have never given you cause."

The accusation was so sudden and so true that I was unable to find any reply to it. She paused for a moment, and then said, in a voice which was hard and cold—

"Don't let your prejudice lead you to interfere with me, however, or say anything to your friend, Mr. Cowles, which might lead to a difference between us. You would find that to be very bad policy."

There was something in the way she spoke which gave an indescribable air of a threat to these few words.



"I have no power," I said, "to interfere with your plans for the future. I cannot help, however, from what I have seen and heard, having fears for my friend."

"Fears!" she repeated, scornfully. "Pray what have you seen and heard? Something from Mr. Reeves, perhaps—I believe he is another of your friends?"

"He never mentioned your name to me," I answered, truthfully enough. "You will be sorry to hear that he is dying." As I said it, we passed by a lighted window, and I glanced down to see what effect my words had upon her. She was laughing—there was no doubt of it; she was laughing quietly to herself. I could see merriment in every feature of her face. I feared and mistrusted the woman from that moment more than ever.

We said little more that night. When we parted she gave me a quick, warning glance, as if to remind me of what she had said about the danger of interference. Her cautions would have made little difference to me could I have seen my way to benefiting Barrington Cowles by anything which I might say. But what could I say? I might say that her former suitors had been unfortunate. I might say that I believed her to be a cruel-hearted woman. I might say that I considered her to possess



wonderful, and almost preternatural, powers. What impression would any of these accusations make upon an ardent lover—a man with my friend's enthusiastic temperament? I felt that it would be useless to advance them, so I was silent.

And now I come to the beginning of the end. Hitherto much has been surmise and inference and hearsay. It is my painful task to relate now, as dispassionately and as accurately as I can, what actually occurred under my own notice, and to reduce to writing the events which preceded the death of my friend.

Towards the end of the winter, Cowles remarked to me that he intended to marry Miss Northcott as soon as possible—probably some time in the spring. He was, as I have already remarked, fairly well off, and the young lady had some money of her own, so that there was no pecuniary reason for a long engagement. "We are going to take a little house out at Corstorphine," he said, "and we hope to see your face at our table, Bob, as often as you can possibly come." I thanked him, and tried to shake off my apprehensions and persuade myself that all would yet be well.

It was about three weeks before the time fixed for the marriage, that Cowles remarked to me one evening that he feared he would be late that night.



"I have had a note from Kate," he said, "asking me to call about eleven o'clock to-night, which seems rather a late hour, but perhaps she wants to talk over something quietly after old Mrs. Merton retires."

It was not until after my friend's departure that I suddenly recollected the mysterious interview which I had been told of as preceding the suicide of young Prescott. Then I thought of the ravings of poor Reeves, rendered more tragic by the fact that I had heard that very day of his death. What was the meaning of it all? Had this woman some baleful secret to disclose which must be known before her marriage? Was it some reason which forbade her to marry? Or was it some reason which forbade others to marry her? I felt so uneasy that I would have followed Cowles, even at the risk of offending him, and endeavoured to dissuade him from keeping his appointment, but a glance at the clock showed me that I was too late.

I was determined to wait up for his return, so I piled some coals upon the fire and took down a novel from the shelf. My thoughts proved more interesting than the book, however, and I threw it on one side. An indefinable feeling of anxiety and depression weighed upon me. Twelve o'clock came, and then half-past, without any sign of my friend. It was



nearly one when I heard a step in the street outside, and then a knocking at the door. I was surprised as I knew that my friend always carried a key—however, I hurried down, and undid the latch. As the door flew open I knew in a moment that my worst apprehensions had been fulfilled. Barrington Cowles was leaning against the railings outside with his face sunk upon his breast, and his whole attitude expressive of the most intense despondency. As he passed in he gave a stagger, and would have fallen had I not thrown my left arm around him. Supporting him with this, and holding the lamp in my other hand, I led him slowly up-stairs into our sitting-room. He sank down upon the sofa without a word. Now that I could get a good view of him, I was horrified to see the change which had come over him. His face was deadly pale, and his very lips were bloodless. His cheeks and forehead were clammy, his eyes glazed, and his whole expression altered. He looked like a man who had gone through some terrible ordeal, and was thoroughly unnerved.

“My dear fellow, what is the matter?” I asked, breaking the silence. “Nothing amiss, I trust? Are you unwell?”

“Brandy!” he gasped. “Give me some brandy!”

I took out the decanter, and was about to help him, when he snatched it from me with a trembling



hand, and poured out nearly half a tumbler of the spirit. He was usually a most abstemious man, but he took this off at a gulp without adding any water to it. It seemed to do him good, for the colour began to come back to his face, and he leaned upon his elbow.

"My engagement is off, Bob," he said, trying to speak calmly, but with a tremor in his voice which he could not conceal. "It is all over."

"Cheer up!" I answered, trying to encourage him. "Don't get down on your luck. How was it? What was it all about?"

"About?" he groaned, covering his face with his hands. "If I did tell you, Bob, you would not believe it. It is too dreadful—too horrible—unutterably awful and incredible! Oh, Kate, Kate!" and he rocked himself to and fro in his grief; "I pictured you an angel and I find you a——"

"A what?" I asked, for he had paused.

He looked at me with a vacant stare, and then suddenly burst out, waving his arms: "A fiend!" he cried. "A ghoul from the pit! A vampire soul behind a lovely face! Now, God forgive me!" he went on in a lower tone, turning his face to the wall; "I have said more than I should. I have loved her too much to speak of her as she is. I love her too much now."



He lay still for some time, and I had hoped that the brandy had had the effect of sending him to sleep, when he suddenly turned his face towards me.

"Did you ever read of wehr-wolves?" he asked.

I answered that I had.

"There is a story," he said, thoughtfully, "in one of Marryat's books, about a beautiful woman who took the form of a wolf at night and devoured her own children. I wonder what put that idea into Marryat's head?"

He pondered for some minutes, and then he cried out for some more brandy. There was a small bottle of laudanum upon the table, and I managed, by insisting upon helping him myself, to mix about half a drachm with the spirits. He drank it off, and sank his head once more upon the pillow. "Anything better than that," he groaned. "Death is better than that. Crime and cruelty; cruelty and crime. Anything is better than that," and so on, with the monotonous refrain, until at last the words became indistinct, his eyelids closed over his weary eyes, and he sank into a profound slumber. I carried him into his bedroom without arousing him; and making a couch for myself out of the chairs, I remained by his side all night.

In the morning Barrington Cowles was in a high



fever. For weeks he lingered between life and death. The highest medical skill of Edinburgh was called in, and his vigorous constitution slowly got the better of his disease. I nursed him during this anxious time; but through all his wild delirium and ravings he never let a word escape him which explained the mystery connected with Miss Northcott. Sometimes he spoke of her in the tenderest words and most loving voice. At others he screamed out that she was a fiend, and stretched out his arms, as if to keep her off. Several times he cried that he would not sell his soul for a beautiful face, and then he would moan in a most piteous voice, "But I love her—I love her for all that; I shall never cease to love her."

When he came to himself he was an altered man. His severe illness had emaciated him greatly, but his dark eyes had lost none of their brightness. They shone out with startling brilliancy from under his dark, overhanging brows. His manner was eccentric and variable—sometimes irritable, sometimes recklessly mirthful, but never natural. He would glance about him in a strange, suspicious manner, like one who feared something, and yet hardly knew what it was he dreaded. He never mentioned Miss Northcott's name—never until that fatal evening of which I have now to speak.



In an endeavour to break the current of his thoughts by frequent change of scene, I travelled with him through the highlands of Scotland, and afterwards down the east coast. In one of these peregrinations of ours we visited the Isle of May, an island near the mouth of the Firth of Forth, which, except in the tourist season, is singularly barren and desolate. Beyond the keeper of the lighthouse there are only one or two families of poor fisher-folk, who sustain a precarious existence by their nets, and by the capture of cormorants and Solan geese. This grim spot seemed to have such a fascination for Cowles that we engaged a room in one of the fishermen's huts, with the intention of passing a week or two there. I found it very dull, but the loneliness appeared to be a relief to my friend's mind. He lost the look of apprehension which had become habitual to him, and became something like his old self. He would wander round the island all day, looking down from the summit of the great cliffs which gird it round, and watching the long green waves as they came booming in and burst in a shower of spray over the rocks beneath.

One night—I think it was our third or fourth on the island—Barrington Cowles and I went outside the cottage before retiring to rest, to enjoy a little fresh air, for our room was small, and the rough lamp



caused an unpleasant odour. How well I remember every little circumstance in connection with that night! It promised to be tempestuous, for the clouds were piling up in the north-west, and the dark wrack was drifting across the face of the moon, throwing alternate belts of light and shade upon the rugged surface of the island and the restless sea beyond.

We were standing talking close by the door of the cottage, and I was thinking to myself that my friend was more cheerful than he had been since his illness, when he gave a sudden, sharp cry, and looking round at him I saw, by the light of the moon, an expression of unutterable horror come over his features. His eyes became fixed and staring, as if riveted upon some approaching object, and he extended his long thin forefinger, which quivered as he pointed.

"Look there!" he cried. "It is she! It is she! You see her there coming down the side of the brae." He gripped me convulsively by the wrist as he spoke. "There she is, coming towards us!"

"Who?" I cried, straining my eyes into the darkness.

"She—Kate—Kate Northcott!" he screamed. "She has come for me. Hold me fast, old friend. Don't let me go!"

"Hold up, old man," I said, clapping him on the



shoulder. "Pull yourself together; you are dreaming; there is nothing to fear."

"She is gone!" he cried, with a gasp of relief. "No, by heaven! there she is again, and nearer—coming nearer. She told me she would come for me, and she keeps her word."

"Come into the house," I said. His hand, as I grasped it, was as cold as ice.

"Ah, I knew it!" he shouted. "There she is, waving her arms. She is beckoning to me. It is the signal. I must go. I am coming, Kate; I am coming!"

I threw my arms around him, but he burst from me with superhuman strength, and dashed into the darkness of the night. I followed him, calling to him to stop, but he ran the more swiftly. When the moon shone out between the clouds I could catch a glimpse of his dark figure, running rapidly in a straight line, as if to reach some definite goal. It may have been imagination, but it seemed to me that in the flickering light I could distinguish a vague something in front of him—a shimmering form which eluded his grasp and led him onwards. I saw his outlines stand out hard against the sky behind him as he surmounted the brow of a little hill, then he disappeared, and that was the last ever seen by mortal eye of Barrington Cowles.



The fishermen and I walked round the island all that night with lanterns, and examined every nook and corner without seeing a trace of my poor lost friend. The direction in which he had been running terminated in a rugged line of jagged cliffs overhanging the sea. At one place here the edge was somewhat crumbled, and there appeared marks upon the turf which might have been left by human feet. We lay upon our faces at this spot, and peered with our lanterns over the edge, looking down on the boiling surge two hundred feet below. As we lay there, suddenly, above the beating of the waves and the howling of the wind, there rose a strange, wild screech from the abyss below. The fishermen—a naturally superstitious race—averred that it was the sound of a woman's laughter, and I could hardly persuade them to continue the search. For my own part I think it may have been the cry of some sea-fowl startled from its nest by the flash of the lantern. However that may be, I never wish to hear such a sound again.

And now I have come to the end of the painful duty which I have undertaken. I have told as plainly and as accurately as I could the story of the death of John Barrington Cowles, and the train of events which preceded it. I am aware that to others the sad episode seemed commonplace enough. Here



is the prosaic account which appeared in the 'Scotsman' a couple of days afterwards:—

"SAD OCCURRENCE ON THE ISLE OF MAY.—The Isle of May has been the scene of a sad disaster. Mr. John Barrington Cowles, a gentleman well known in university circles as a most distinguished student, and the present holder of the Neil Arnott prize for physics, has been recruiting his health in this quiet retreat. The night before last he suddenly left his friend, Mr. Robert Armitage, and he has not since been heard of. It is almost certain that he has met his death by falling over the cliffs which surround the island. Mr. Cowles' health has been failing for some time, partly from over-study and partly from worry connected with family affairs. By his death the University loses one of her most promising alumni."

I have nothing more to add to my statement. I have unburdened my mind of all that I know. I can well conceive that many, after weighing all that I have said, will see no ground for an accusation against Miss Northcott. They will say that, because a man of a naturally excitable disposition says and does wild things, and even eventually commits self-murder after a sudden and heavy disappointment, there is no reason why vague charges should be advanced against a young lady. To this, I answer



that they are welcome to their opinion. For my own part, I ascribe the death of William Prescott, of Archibald Reeves, and of John Barrington Cowles to this woman with as much confidence as if I had seen her drive a dagger into their hearts.

You ask me, no doubt, what my own theory is which will explain all these strange facts. I have none, or, at best, a dim and vague one. That Miss Northcott possessed extraordinary powers over the minds, and through the minds over the bodies, of others, I am convinced, as well as that her instincts were to use this power for base and cruel purposes. That some even more fiendish and terrible phase of character lay behind this—some horrible trait which it was necessary for her to reveal before marriage—is to be inferred from the experience of her three lovers, while the dreadful nature of the mystery thus revealed can only be surmised from the fact that the very mention of it drove from her those who had loved her so passionately. Their subsequent fate was, in my opinion, the result of her vindictive remembrance of their desertion of her, and that they were forewarned of it at the time was shown by the words of both Reeves and Cowles. Above this, I can say nothing. I lay the facts soberly before the public as they came under my notice. I have never seen Miss Northcott since, nor do I wish to do so.



If by the words I have written I can save any one human being from the snare of those bright eyes and that beautiful face, then I can lay down my pen with the assurance that my poor friend has not died altogether in vain. Δ



## MY FATHER'S GHOST.

THE apparition of which I am about to write was called "The Camden Wonder," or "Mickleton Hooter," by the rustic population of that part of Warwickshire which it frequented. Unlike most spectres, it did not confine its visits to one particular spot, although a dreary common was its favourite haunt, but appeared in various places within a radius of several miles. Neither did it always manifest itself in the same form, but seemed to assume different shapes at will. It is, however, as it appeared to my own father, some forty years ago, of which I have to tell. He had been spending the evening with a neighbour, whose house was situated at the bottom of a little dingle and within the "ghostly radius," and, in company with a friend, was returning home towards the witching hour of twelve. No thought of witch or ghost, however, was in either of their minds, for as their horses slowly climbed the steep side of the dingle leading up to the common



before mentioned, and across which their road lay, they were discussing the pleasant evening just passed, and the kind host, whose cheery "good night" still seemed to follow them, when suddenly their ears were assailed by a far different sound. From among the dark shadows towards the upper part of the dingle rose a cry, shrill, agonizing, awful, the cry as of a woman in deadly fear or pain. It seemed to quiver for a moment in the air above them, then went wailing and sobbing downwards in the direction of their friend's house, while at the instant, straight before them, apparently upon the top of a low wall which at that place bounded the common, appeared a shape—what they could not distinguish from the uncertain gleam of the moonlight, and the rapidity with which it glided along. Of course they were startled—horrified! the cry alone would have been enough to insure that; but quickly recovering themselves, and thinking it a good opportunity to solve a mystery of which they had both often heard, they urged their horses, which had stopped dead and were trembling all over, in pursuit, but before they could reach the wall the thing, whatever it was, had vanished! Foiled in their attempt to discover the hoax, if hoax it were, and deeming there would be no second appearance of the apparition, they made for a gate in



the wall, and passing through it urged their horses to a gallop over the bare treeless waste. They had scarcely reached the centre of the common, however, when again the same awful cry burst on their ears, and standing clear in the moonlight, not a hundred yards away, was the figure of a woman in long white garments. As before, the horses stopped so suddenly as almost to unseat their riders, and began trembling violently; but my father and his friend, recovering from the momentary shock, and thoroughly aroused, urged them onwards with whip and rein; but, although they averred that they had never removed their eyes from the figure, when they reached the spot, nothing was to be seen—nothing but an old furze bush not large enough to shelter a rabbit. They rode round and round the place for several minutes, but to no purpose, and fearing that my mother might be getting anxious, they turned their horses' heads again towards home, and soon accomplished the comparatively short distance which lay between the common and our house. On arriving they found their fears had not been groundless, for my mother was standing at the door looking pale and frightened, and as they drew up she ran to my father, exclaiming,

“I am so glad you are come! I opened the door to look for you a few minutes ago, and *I heard such*



*a fearful cry come from over the common, that I feared something dreadful had happened!*" and she clung to his arm in very real and evident agitation. My father tried to pooh pooh her fears, but seeing she would not be put off, he at length told her of their night's adventure. An adventure, however, upon which no subsequent inquiries of himself or his friend—and they have made many, though quietly for fear of ridicule—could ever throw any light.

"Pah!" I hear some sceptical reader exclaim, "the affair admits of a very simple explanation. The cry proceeded from some fox caught in a trap, they will yell in a most agonizing fashion when hurt, and as for the vision—gentlemen returning from a convival party are apt to see strange things." In reply I would say, that both my father and his friend had been born and bred in the country, were accustomed to be abroad at all hours, and knew its sights and sounds by heart, therefore were not likely to be deceived in the cry of a fox; and even if they were in the condition hinted at by our critic (which my father positively denies), what about the evident horror of the horses and my mother's spontaneous and independent testimony?

One more incident I will give, as it serves to corroborate my father's story. A short time before



the occurrences I have related a Quaker gentleman, well known in the neighbourhood as a sober, God-fearing man, had occasion to call at the farm-house near the dingle on a matter of business, and being warmly pressed by its hospitable owner, remained until a late hour. They much wished him to stay the night, as it was very dark, and part of his road lay across the lonely common; but this he would not hear of, and with a humorous assurance that he "should not meet anybody worse than himself," he bade them good-night. Half an hour had passed, and the family were just retiring to rest, the farmer pausing in the hall to lock up, when the garden gate closed with a loud clang, and hurried footsteps were heard approaching the front door. It was immediately thrown open by the master, and there stood their late guest, pale and evidently much disturbed. Grasping the farmer's outstretched hand he stepped quickly inside, exclaiming in short, nervous speech, quite unlike his usual formal accents—

"I don't know what thou hast got—on thy common—up yonder, friend, but, if thou dost not mind—I will accept thy offer, and stay in thy house till morning."

He did so, but neither persuasion nor entreaty could induce him to relate what he had seen and



heard; he only said he "wouldn't go through such an experience again for all he was worth."

I might supplement the old Quaker's testimony by that of others; indeed, only a short time ago I met with an old gentleman, formerly a resident in the neighbourhood, who had known many people to whom the apparition had appeared in different forms; but the only approach to a solution of the mystery that I could ever glean consisted in an old tradition—that many years ago a young girl was murdered in the vicinity of the common, and that the murder was connected in some way with the G—— family, then resident in the neighbourhood.

THE END.





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